Principled Planning

A Guide for Corporate Grantmaker Retreats

Elaine Gast

COUNCIL *on* FOUNDATIONS

Vision

The Council's vision for the field is of

A vibrant, growing and responsible philanthropic sector that advances the common good.

We see ourselves as part of a broad philanthropic community that will contribute to this vision. We aim to be an important leader in reaching the vision.

Mission

The Council on Foundations provides the opportunity, leadership and tools needed by philanthropic organizations to expand, enhance and sustain their ability to advance the common good.

To carry out this mission, we will be a membership organization with effective and diverse leadership that helps the field be larger, more effective, more responsible and more cooperative.

By "*common good*," we mean the sum total of conditions that enable community members to thrive. These achievements have a shared nature that goes beyond individual benefits.

By "*philanthropic organizations*," we mean any vehicle that brings people together to enhance the effectiveness, impact and leverage of their philanthropy. This includes private and community foundations, corporate foundations and giving programs, operating foundations and public foundations, as well as emerging giving and grantmaking mechanisms involving collective participation.

Statement of Inclusiveness

The Council on Foundations was formed to promote responsible and effective philanthropy. The mission requires a commitment to inclusiveness as a fundamental operating principle and calls for an active and ongoing process that affirms human diversity in its many forms, encompassing but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, disability and philosophy. We seek diversity in order to ensure that a range of perspectives, opinions and experiences are recognized and acted upon in achieving the Council's mission. The Council also asks members to make a similar commitment to inclusiveness in order to better enhance their abilities to contribute to the common good of our changing society.

ISBN 1-932677-41-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Gast, Elaine.
Principled planning: a guide for corporate grantmaker retreats / written by Elaine Gast.
p. cm.
ISBN 1-932677-41-0 (alk. paper)
1. Corporations—Charitable contributions—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Management retreats—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Council on Foundations. II. Title.
HG4028.C6G37 2006
658.15'3—dc22
2006011034

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Definitions for Corporate Grantmaking

- **Foundation**—A legal entity formed as a nonprofit corporation (or charitable trust) under state law and granted 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status by the IRS. A corporate foundation receives the majority of its funding from its parent company.
- **Giving Program**—A company that makes its grants and other contributions directly to charitable organizations.
- **Organization**—In this book, refers to a foundation or corporate giving program.
- **Principles**—Guiding ideals that inform foundation/giving program management, governance and grantmaking decisions.
- **Governing body**—Depending on the structure of the philanthropic program, a foundation board, company grant committee or other oversight/descisionmaking group.

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Stewardship Principles for Corporate Grantmakers

Adopted by the Committee on Corporate Grantmaking, September 2004
For more information, visit http://bestpractices.cof.org/corporate.

GOVERNANCE

PRINCIPLE I:

WE HAVE A GOVERNING BOARD THAT ESTABLISHES THE MISSION, GUIDES THE OPERATIONS, OVERSEES THE EFFECTIVENESS AND ENSURES THE ETHICAL CONDUCT OF THE FOUNDATION OR GIVING PROGRAM.

PRACTICE OPTIONS

A. Develop and periodically review the foundation/giving program's values and mission statement, strategies, program areas and guidelines, goals, annual and multiyear objectives and geographic focus.

B. Dedicate sufficient human, financial and technological resources.

C. Plan for leadership continuity.

D. Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the foundation/giving program's, governance, management and grantmaking.

PRINCIPLE II:

AUTHORITY IS VESTED IN THE GOVERNING BOARD AS A WHOLE, AND EACH MEMBER IS EQUIPPED TO ADVANCE THE FOUNDATION'S OR GIVING PROGRAM'S MISSION.

PRACTICE OPTIONS

A. Identify the desired characteristics of the governing body, including size, composition and member skills and experience; consider diversity and the perspective offered by representatives from outside the company.

B. Develop bylaws or a committee charter that includes the term length of governing body members; the number of consecutive and/or total terms members may serve; roles, responsibilities and fiduciary duties; and selection and removal processes.

C. Conduct business regularly to ensure meaningful interaction, including at least one annual in-person meeting (governing body and staff).

D. Stay on mission; all grants are made within grantmaking guidelines, and exceptions are reviewed by the entire governing body and do not exceed a maximum dollar cap or percentage of total giving.

E. Provide comprehensive orientation and training for governing body members.

F. Provide continuing education on all aspects of foundation/giving program governance, including legal, fiduciary and grantmaking issues.

Principle III:

We consider multiple strategies to further our mission.

Practice Options

A. Learn best practice models and compare practices against others in the field.

B. Consider a range of financial support options that could include general operating, project, capital, research, scholarship, endowment, multiyear and challenge grants, and funds to respond to emergency or other unanticipated needs.

C. Use program and grant evaluation to improve outcomes.

D. Share successes, failures and lessons learned from grant and program evaluations internally and externally, as appropriate.

E. Collaborate with others who fund similar work.

F. Ensure that staff is well-qualified and receives ongoing professional development.

G. Consider in-kind donations, such as product and employee time.

H. Provide technical assistance to grantees and other nonprofits.

I. Convene community leaders, nonprofits and/or other funders doing similar work.

J. Engage in public policy advocacy as permitted by law.

K. Invest in ways that further the mission (program-related investments, microcredit loans, socially responsible investing and proxy voting/shareholder resolutions).

Principle IV:

Our governing body exercises active fiscal oversight.

Practice Options

A. Know and ensure compliance with fiduciary duties.

B. Ensure that expenses are reasonable and in proportion to amounts spent on grants and technical assistance.

C. Confirm that proper due diligence is performed to ensure grantees' fiscal and organizational viability and that grants are used for charitable purposes.

D. Establish effective internal controls and formalized record keeping.

E. Approve an annual budget and assess the foundation/giving program's financial performance relative to the approved budget.

Corporate foundations only

F. Ensure that the foundation has a written investment policy adequate for its size and complexity that includes investment objectives, asset allocation strategy, spending and/or payout policy and rationale for selecting and evaluating investment managers/advisors.

G. Conduct an internal review of foundation compliance with legal, regulatory and financial reporting requirements and provide a summary of the review to foundation board members.

H. Obtain an external review of the foundation's finances (in accordance with asset size) by conducting a financial review or periodic audit.

ETHICS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Principle V:

We recognize and act upon our obligations to multiple stakeholders: the corporate donor and its directors and employees, shareholders, grantees and grantseekers, the public and governmental bodies.

Practice Options

A. Educate the governing body and staff as to what constitutes conflict of interest:
   1. Document the affiliations or involvement of company directors, governing body members, grantmaking staff and their families with potential grantees, even if the affiliation creates no financial conflict of interest.
   2. Establish and sign annually a written conflict of interest policy that identifies types of conduct or transactions that raise concerns and describes how conflicts or perceived conflicts of interest are resolved.

B. Incorporate diverse people, perspectives, knowledge and experience into the work:
   1. Access pertinent data, e.g., census, regional indicators and studies.
   2. Include subject matter experts or community representatives as speakers at governing body meetings, on committees or on advisory groups.
   3. Appoint governing body members and employ staff who demonstrate the capacity to understand issues and communicate skillfully across cultural, socio-economic and other boundaries.
   4. Encourage governing body and staff to be actively involved in the community and to bring new or underrepresented perspectives back to the foundation/giving program.
   5. Establish governance policies and operational and grantmaking practices.
   6. Develop training resources that promote inclusion and reduce discrimination.

C. Identify and practice the elements of ethical conduct.

D. Develop a policy to handle good-faith complaints about violations of foundation/giving program policy or the conduct of their governing body and staff.

Corporate foundations only

E. Keep abreast of the self-dealing laws; avoid self-dealing and even the appearance of self-dealing.

Principle VI:

We respect our nonprofit partners' missions and expertise and strive for relationships based on candor, understanding and fairness.

Practice Options

A. Develop transparent grants management processes:
   1. Create clear and complete program guidelines and application procedures (if unsolicited applications are accepted); consider accepting common grant applications.
   2. Request only information (pre- and post-grant) that will actually be used in decisionmaking and corresponds appropriately to the size or purpose of the grant.
   3. Specify the steps and timing of the review process.
   4. Acknowledge grantseeker inquiries and submissions promptly.
   5. Use grant agreement letters to outline mutual expectations.
   6. Explain rationale for declined grants and give constructive feedback when appropriate.

B. Conduct site visits when appropriate, guided by the size and purpose of the grant and the impact on the grantee.

C. Acknowledge and minimize the effects of the imbalance of power in grantee/grantor relationships.

D. Seek feedback (including anonymous) on foundation/giving program performance from current and former grantees and denied applicants.

E. Respond to and act promptly on complaints.

Principle VII:

We welcome public interest and communicate openly.

Practice Options

A. Make public (either online and/or in print) the foundation/giving program's governing body, mission, guidelines, grant process (including whether unsolicited proposals are accepted), finances, procedures, timetable, grantee list with amounts and purpose, etc.

B. Identify and make public a point of contact for the foundation/giving program.

C. Respond to requests for information promptly, in no more than 30 days.

D. Prepare and distribute (either online or in print) an annual report (or letter for small foundations/giving programs).

E. Train governing body and staff on how to respond to the media, legislators and other audiences.

F. Develop a strategy for reaching out to the media, legislators and other audiences.

CONNECTING TO THE COMPANY

Principle VIII:

Our philanthropic activities are aligned with the company's vision, mission, values, culture and strategies.

Practice Options

A. Develop a mission and strategic direction for the foundation/giving program that reflects the values and interests of the company and of the communities in which the company operates and employees live.

B. Integrate philanthropic activities into the company's overall corporate social responsibility strategy.

Principle IX:

We provide opportunities for the company's employees to participate in charitable activities, recognizing that benefits accrue to the employees, the company and the community.

Practice Options

A. Develop programs such as dollars for doers, matching gifts and employee giving campaigns.

B. Define and communicate employee involvement rationale, strategies, goals and outcome measures.

C. Establish criteria and process for linking employees to volunteer opportunities.

D. Create internal incentive programs to increase employee involvement.

E. Provide training and tools for employee engagement.

F. Create employee grantmaking or advisory committees.

G. Designate an employee liaison/ambassador for grants.

Chapter 1
Why a Stewardship Principles Retreat?

> *"The principles offer options, which the governing body can use to make its decisions. They put trustees into more of an ownership role."*
>
> *—Chris Park, President, Lucent Technologies Foundation*

The Stewardship Principles are designed to help you govern, manage and lead your corporate foundation or giving program. They come to you as the result of more than a year's worth of work, with input from hundreds of corporate foundation executives and trustees as well as other experts including academics, attorneys and even an ethicist.

Stewardship Principles sound like a list of lofty ideals—something to strive for, but not easy to achieve. Don't let the title intimidate you. Chances are you are already doing much of the work. The principles simply give you ways to celebrate what you're doing well and envision what you can do better.

Still, the principles cover such a wide range of topics and practice options that they can seem overwhelming at first. If you're like many organizations, you might look at them and think, "Where do I begin? Sure, they look great on paper, but how do I present them to my governing body? How do I get them to even *review* the principles, much less put them into action?" Good questions. You're not alone. Many of your colleagues are asking the same things. To start, it will help if you share a few key points with your governing body.

In This Chapter

- Learn how the Stewardship Principles are an entrée to a different kind of governing body discussion.
- Read how your colleagues are using retreats to discuss the Stewardship Principles.
- Identify a principle or practice option you can start working on.

Consider this:

- The principles were developed by your peers. They are your colleagues' best ideas on the most useful and effective practices in the field today.
- The principles suit many different foundations and giving programs—new or experienced, small or large, staffed or unstaffed.
- The practice options are just that—options. They aren't meant to be prescriptive or place your governing body in a box. A practice option that's not right for you now may be just what you need in the future.
- The best way to approach the principles is to start small. Don't take on all of them at once. Ask the governing body to prioritize and focus on one or two at a time.

Are you breathing any easier yet? It gets better. This book offers a multitude of ideas for how you can bring the Stewardship Principles to your governing body. It walks you through the process of designing and conducting a *different* kind of meeting, a meeting during which you'll begin an in-depth exploration of one—or more—governance, management or grantmaking practices. We'll call this type of meeting a retreat.

Retreats are nothing new or extraordinary; in fact, your governing body may have held them many times before. What's different about this kind of retreat is that you use the Stewardship Principles to frame your discussion.

Why a Retreat?

A retreat is certainly not the only way to introduce the principles to your governing body, but it is arguably the best. Here's why.

Retreats help your governing body go beyond business as usual. They give participants the opportunity to develop thoughtful policy and measure your work against best practices in the field. They build ownership of the organization and can generate a higher level of involvement going forward. As an added bonus, they often improve communication and create a stronger sense of teamwork among governing body members.

Retreats help governing body members get out of their regular meeting mindset and approach their work in a different way. The retreats aren't limited by formalities or governed by Robert's Rules of Order; in fact, they are often casual events that encourage people to loosen up. The relaxed atmosphere can inspire creative thinking and candid discussion on important issues.

Whereas a typical business meeting is driven by decisionmaking and timelines, a retreat gives your governing body a forum to explore potential changes or address underlying concerns. At a retreat, you have the time and focus to delve deeper into issues such as governing structure and effectiveness, mission review, strategy and program evaluation—the very issues the Stewardship Principles themselves address.

Retreats can last anywhere from a few hours to an entire weekend and, in fact, don't have to be called a "retreat" at all. The length or location doesn't matter—the discussion does.

A Tool for Principled Planning

Corporate foundations and giving programs struggle with different things at different times. The principles speak to every organization, giving you a tool to assess where you are and where you'd like to be. Let's look at an example of how it might work.

Say your governing body wants to formulate or review its mission statement to make sure it is relevant to the organization and the community you serve. If you consult the Stewardship Principles, you'll find that Principle I.A. calls for your governing body to develop and periodically review the organization's values and mission statement, strategies, program areas and guidelines, goals, annual and multiyear objectives and geographic focus. A retreat is the right setting to do this.

For example, you might plan a facilitated retreat to discuss the governing body's ideologies and interests related to the current mission and/or assess corporate and community needs. You might also seek advice or assistance from grantmaking professionals at your colleague organizations who have been through a mission-review process themselves.

In planning the retreat, you will want to involve your governing body members as early as possible. For example, if you share the Stewardship Principles with the governing body before the retreat, the meeting will take on a new level of credibility as the governing body realizes it is doing something that reflects best practice in the field. Then ask them to focus, for instance, on Principle I.A. Request that they review that principle and its practice options and comment on them. Or, you might develop a specific survey related to the retreat agenda and ask them to respond.

For example, for Principle I.A. you might ask the governing body to prepare verbal or written answers to the following:

- Is our mission statement relevant and effective for our company and foundation/giving program's strategic goals? Is it grounded in our values?
- Does the statement communicate who we are and what we do?
- How are we "making a difference?"
- What flexibility do we have to alter the mission?
- How could we change the mission to better meet the needs of the community? To better reflect the interests of the company?

Principle I.A.

Develop and periodically review the foundation/giving program's values and mission statement, strategies, program areas and guidelines, goals, annual and multiyear objectives and geographic focus.

As your governing body members respond, you can use their answers to craft a discussion outline for the retreat. As they see the correlation between their work and the Stewardship Principles, the retreat will take on a new level of importance.

Principle I.A. is just one example of a principle that lends itself to a retreat discussion. Most all of them do. Consider other reasons why foundations and giving programs might hold a retreat, such as to:

- Define (or refine) governing body and staff roles and responsibilities (Principle II.B.).
- Consider multiple strategies to advance the mission (e.g., in grantmaking, investments, technical assistance) (Principle III.B.).
- Identify strategic issues and jump-start a strategic planning process (Principle I.A.).
- Measure progress against best practices in the field (Principle III.A.).
- Explore or modify policies and governance structure (Principle II.A.).
- Develop a more business-oriented giving strategy (Principle VIII.A.).
- Orient new governing body members (Principle II.E.).
- Assess effectiveness as a governing body (Principle I.D.).
- Seek feedback on the organization's performance from grantees (Principle VI.D.).
- Develop a plan for reaching out to the media (Principle VII.F.).
- Develop new programs that engage employees (Principle IX.A.).

Nearly every topic you might discuss at a retreat already has a principle or practice option that corrsponds to it. The principles are a perfect framework for your planning.

Here are some examples from your colleagues who used a retreat to introduce the principles:

To get buy-in from the governing body

"We wanted to engage the board in the strategic direction of programs as opposed to the programs being entirely staff-driven," said Chris Park, president of Lucent Technologies Foundation. "We incorporated some of the principles into our conversations on board roles and responsibilities and were able to show them some of the best practices in the nonprofit world. The principles offer options, which the board can use to make the decisions. It puts trustees into more of an ownership role."

To gauge what you have done

"We used the Stewardship Principles to organize topics at a retreat and prioritize what was important to us," said Kathleen Odne, executive director of the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation. "The practice options serve as good discussion entry points—where we could see what we were already doing and how we might apply the suggested practices to some of our initiatives. It was powerful for our trustees to learn what their peers were doing. After all, the principles were written by their peers—they aren't an edict."

To examine values

"We devoted a special meeting to discussing the first of the Stewardship Principles on governance. We wanted to know: Are our values in line with what we were funding?" said Lindsey Stammerjohn, managing director of the John Gogian Family Foundation. "It was a great meeting. We came up with 15 action items—among them we hired legal counsel, updated our website, rewrote several policies and changed our site visit procedures. We discussed how we could make things more clear and transparent. It was an all-day process, and we needed a retreat in order to focus."

"I hear it's going to be a very serious retreat. No email."

About This Book

In sum, the principles give your governing body a "big picture" approach to its work to bring about better governance, management and grantmaking. By setting aside time for a retreat, you can lift the Stewardship Principles from the page—and into practice.

The guide gives you, the corporate grantmaking staff or governing body member, practical advice and tips on planning a retreat that focuses on the Stewardship Principles. Because the information speaks to different levels of experience, it uses basic language that all readers will find understandable and relevant. It includes examples and anecdotes from all types of grantmaking organizations—not just your own.

In the end, how you use this book depends on your organization's priorities, its composition and culture, and the type of retreat or meeting that will work best for you. Although you may not be ready to plan a retreat using the principles and practice options now—this book will prepare you for when you are.

Chapter 2
Getting the Boss on Board

> *"You need a clear agenda that shows the [governing body] you value their participation—one that includes them in the discussion."*
>
> *—Kerry Mellette, President & CEO, Williamsburg Community Health Association*

Whose Idea Is This, Anyway?

Once you figure out the *why* of holding a Stewardship Principles retreat, you next should figure out the *who*. Whose idea is it to have a retreat? And who will do the work?

The idea for the retreat can come from anyone, but the *support* for the retreat needs to come from the top. If the leadership of the foundation/giving program is committed to the retreat, it will set a tone for the rest of the participants. If the governing body chair or company CEO is not "on board" with the purpose or agenda, the retreat may not have the same level of credibility or focus and may feel like a waste of everyone's time. Be sure to involve the leadership as early as possible in the process.

In This Chapter

- Determine who's in charge of the retreat.
- Identify what you want to accomplish.
- Learn how to involve and motivate governing body members in planning for the retreat.

If you've never held a retreat before, here's how it typically works: The foundation board chair or corporate CEO and/or the executive director of the corporate foundation/giving program usually lead the effort. Together they make sure that all of the responsibilities are covered and decide whether the organization will hire an outside facilitator. They will also decide who will be the meeting organizer (the person who will coordinate the retreat logistics).

In some foundations/giving programs, someone other than the chair, CEO or executive director is charged with organizing the retreat. If this is the case, it helps for that person to work with the foundation/giving program's leaders to decide the meeting outcomes and agenda. This helps keep everyone in the know and ensures the chair's or CEO's buy-in on what happens at the event.

The chair, CEO, executive director and/or the meeting organizer may involve other people in planning the retreat. Some governing bodies even form a small planning committee to divide the responsibility. This could be the current staff members or outside experts who will address certain programmatic, management or governance issues.

Last Things First: What Do You Want to Accomplish?

Planning is the key to any retreat. You can't design a process if you don't know what you want out of it. Long before you plan the date of the meeting, you should first think about *why* you want to hold a retreat in the first place.

The answer is not always obvious. Ask yourself and your colleagues: What about our governance, management or grantmaking do we want to examine or to be different? How can we use a retreat to move toward our goals? Who's in favor of having a retreat? Who's opposed? You must be clear on the purpose of the meeting to determine that a retreat is, in fact, the best way to accomplish your goals.

Take the time to sit down and clarify two or three outcomes you would like to see emerge from the retreat. Keep in mind, too, that there are often secondary outcomes or benefits—beyond the formal goals and agenda—that can result from retreats. For example, your group may come away with stronger personal relations among peers; better relations between the governing body and staff; more identification with the organization's history, mission and values; a more thoughtful and responsive culture within the organization; and so forth. Many organizations plan retreats with both the stated outcomes and these secondary and often more subjective outcomes in mind.

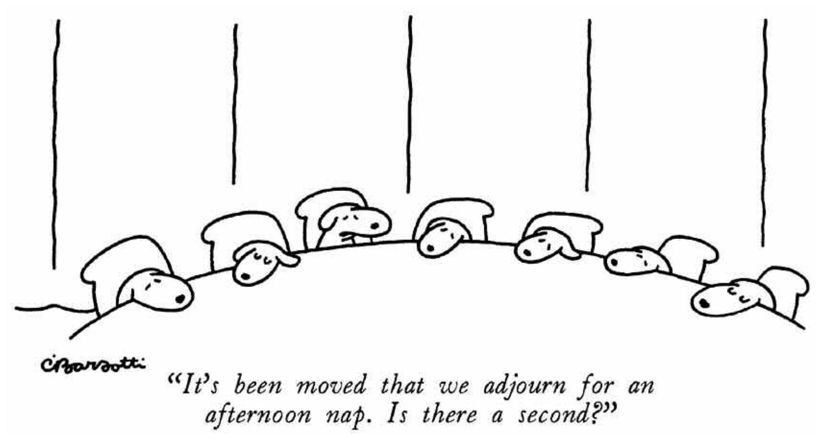
Only when you have identified the outcomes can you start making the case for holding the retreat and planning the agenda.

When envisioning your desired outcomes, consider what stage of development your organization is in. If your foundation/giving program is new, or if the governance has recently changed, you will expect different results than those from an organization that is well established and stable. For example, new organizations may need to spend a good chunk of time discussing their mission and purpose. In contrast, an organization that has "been around the block" might spend more time refining its grantmaking program or evaluating its practices relative to the Stewardship Principles.

Why *Not* to Plan a Retreat

Just as there are good reasons to hold a retreat, there are bad ones too. Don't hold a retreat if you or your foundation/giving program's leadership:

- Merely want to keep up the tradition of holding an annual retreat.
- Aren't working on any real outcomes.
- Have a covert agenda.
- Want a platform to control the coversation.
- Don't intend to act on what participants decide.



As you plan, be reasonable in what you want to accomplish. For example, don't expect to resolve long-held conflicts or solve world hunger in one day. Retreats are the beginning of a process—a means to an end rather than an end itself.

Be sure that the governing body agrees on the initial purpose or goals for the retreat. The program should be designed to keep the group's interest and focus for an extended period of time. The good news is many tools and techniques can help (See chapter 5).

Meeting Planning Checklist

Ready to start planning? Use this checklist as you design the retreat:

- What is the purpose of the meeting? What are the desired outcomes?
- Is the meeting the best way to achieve the desired outcomes?
- Who will attend the meeting?
- Is the purpose clear to everyone who will attend?
- What is the "real" problem or situation?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What aspects of the work might present difficulties?
- Who will be responsible for planning the meeting logistics?
- Who will be the recorder?
- Who will be responsible for getting out the meeting summary and follow-up plan?
- Who will follow up to ensure the action steps are carried out?

Excerpt from Great Meetings! How to Facilitate Like a Pro, *Hansen Press, 1997.*

Involving the Governing Body

As the staff of the organization, you could easily plan the retreat on your own. You can decide which principle to focus on at the retreat, whether to hire an outside facilitator, where and when the event will be and so on. This approach may save you time, but if the governing body doesn't feel ownership over the event, your work may be in vain.

By involving governing body members, you give them the opportunity to shape an event that affects them. You're already asking for their participation in the meeting. Why not give them a chance to participate in the planning too? This will not only encourage them to show up on the day of the retreat, but also help build trust in the process. And they will likely have some good ideas that you didn't think of.

According to Rayna Aylward, executive director of Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, "We always test-drive what we plan to do at a meeting *before* the meeting begins. For example, we plan to send the Stewardship Principles to our board six weeks before the board meeting in which they will be discussed. Staff will talk to key board members about the strategy and agenda and ask for their preliminary feedback. This not only helps shape a workable agenda, but it also helps us build allies in advance."

One of the most important things you can do is assign governing body members (or remind them of) their role. Explain the purpose of the meeting, the tasks they have been (or will be) asked to complete and the reasons their participation is important. In other words, give them all the tools they need to prepare for the retreat and to contribute in a meaningful way.

There are many other ways you can involve your governing body members early on. Whatever approach you use, it's important to keep everyone informed as decisions are made.

Survey members

Before deciding to have a retreat, ask members via a written or online survey to identify important issues worth discussing at the retreat. For example, some organizations have used the Stewardship Principles as a basis for their surveys, asking governing body members to prioritize the issues that the principles present. They then use the survey results to form an agenda for the retreat. **Tip:** You can find relatively inexpensive online survey tools that calculate results for you. Survey Monkey is one of the least expensive online survey companies. Depending on the level of sophistication of your survey, it ranges from free to approximately $19.95 per month. For more information, visit www.surveymonkey.com. Other online survey companies include www.zoomerang.com, www.questionpro.com and www.surveyshare.com.

Form a planning committee

As mentioned in a previous section, you might also form a planning committee of two or three people who handle every aspect of planning the retreat. This helps ensure that the ideas for the retreat or meeting come from more than one person and that there is group ownership. By assigning tasks, such as setting up the room, keeping the time and recording the notes, you can make the meeting belong to everyone.

Take an informal poll

You might devote some time at meetings preceding the retreat to ask governing body members to identify important topics. With that information you can develop the purpose for the retreat, put it in writing and send it out to participants. Ask them for their input or any changes to the outcomes they would like to see.

Introduce the facilitator

If the retreat will be designed and led by an outside facilitator, send a memo to participants describing the purpose of the retreat and include the facilitator's bio. The memo should explain the facilitator's role and any pre-work (interviews, surveys, focus groups) that he or she will ask of members.

Interview governing body members

Interviewing is usually best when conducted by an outside facilitator. That way, participants can speak freely and confidentially. However, if you (or someone else inside the organization) will be conducting the interviews, there are ways to keep the conversation less biased. For example, always use questions that are neutral and open-ended. Ask for suggestions, concerns or areas that the organization can improve—repeatedly giving participants the opportunity to raise issues before the retreat. You might ask: What do you want to see happen at the retreat? What are your fears or concerns? What outcomes would you like to avoid?

When interviewing, don't respond to criticisms or concerns during the interviews—wait until the retreat itself. Let them know that their responses will be compiled confidentially in a final summary of issues to be addressed.

Assign pre-work

You might give the governing body reading or "thinking assignments" to complete before the retreat. If you are holding a self-assessment retreat, send members the Stewardship Principles far in advance, giving them time to get familiar with them and ask questions. Be sure to distribute any pre-work assignments in plenty of time for people to do the work.

Distribute a meeting book

If the governing body will discuss technical or detailed information during the retreat, it can be helpful to distribute a briefing book—much like you would before a regular meeting. You might even ask governing body members to submit material for the briefing book, which will help them to feel invested in the success of the meeting. In general, a meeting book includes the purpose of the retreat (the why), an agenda (the how), the logistics for the meeting or retreat (where, when and what time), background materials and any pre-retreat assignments (e.g., reading, surveys, questionnaires) with deadlines noted.

Describe what's in it for them

In a cover memo, explain to them the purpose of the retreat and what their role will be during the event. As applicable, you might point out to them the reasons the retreat will benefit them and the organization overall. For example, you might remind them that retreats:

- Strengthen what it is they do—good governance and grantmaking.
- Help them connect on a more personal level, forming a more cohesive group.
- Celebrate past accomplishments.
- Evaluate present effectiveness.
- Develop plans for the future.
- Improve communication, both internal and external.
- Clarify the mission, vision and/or grantmaking program.

Begin and/or end on a social note

Some organizations like to begin or end their retreats with a social dinner or reception. This helps people loosen up before a retreat and unwind after the retreat is over. It sends a message to governing body members that you appreciate them taking the time to participate.

Peer Practice:

Motivating Members

How do your colleagues motivate their members for a retreat? Read to find out:

"I drafted a written survey using the governance section of the Stewardship Principles and sent it to our board. In the survey, board members were asked to assign a number to how well the board addressed each of the principles. I tallied the results and sorted them in terms of what got the highest and lowest ratings. That gave us a handful of things to address at the retreat—some substance that we could work on and change."

—Anna Kay Frueauff, Trustee, Charles A. Frueauff Foundation

"Our trustees always want to know what the business benefit is. We remind them that we are well-connected to the company and the customer needs, and we're aware of building morale among employees."

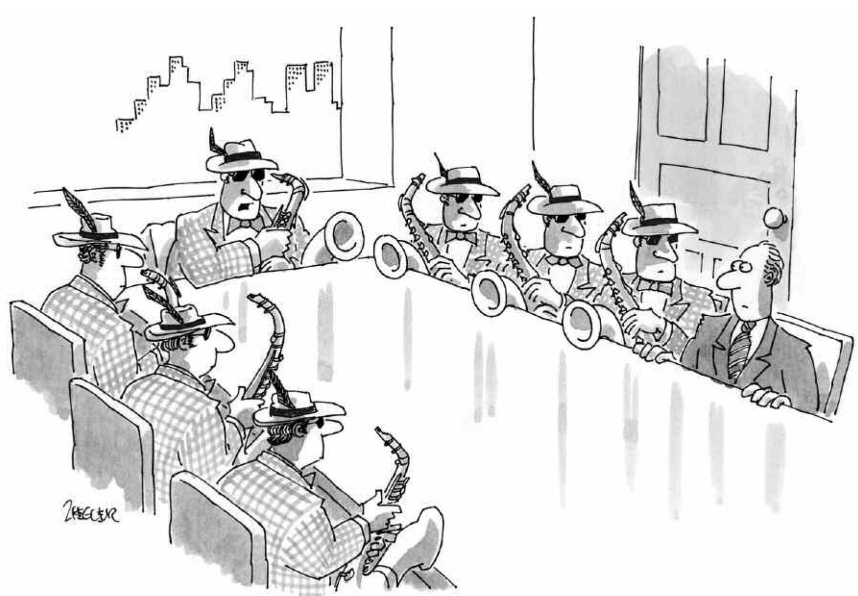
—Chris Park, President, Lucent Technologies Foundation

"Based on the theme or issue that needs to be addressed at the retreat, the staff finds current literature on the issue. We send a packet with these reading materials along with an outline of the retreat. This gives people time and the opportunity to think about it in advance."

—Bill Conrad, Executive Director, Stackpole-Hall Foundation

"We distributed a questionnaire a couple of months in advance of the retreat. The facilitator then followed up with phone conversations with individual trustees prior to the retreat, which motivated people because they had opportunities to express their opinions."

—Laura Gilbertson, Director, The William Bingham Foundation



"Damn it, Hopkins, didn't you get yesterday's memo?"

Stewardship Principles Survey Memo 1

Courtesy of the Tauck Foundation

Dear Board Members,

I have spoken with most of you by now to get your thoughts and suggestions regarding the ongoing work of the foundation. The following survey (at www.surveymonkey.com) is intended to broaden and deepen that feedback by asking you to rate the Tauck Foundation's work relative to a set of national "best practices" for family foundations. This will help us to identify issues to be addressed when we meet in May and it will familiarize you with the latest thinking in the field.

This survey utilizes the Stewardship Principles, adopted by the Council on Foundations in September 2004. The Council on Foundations believes families strive to be responsible stewards of their foundation resources, to uphold the public trust and to practice their philanthropy in ways that reflect fundamental values, including honesty, integrity, fairness and trust.

The Stewardship Principles describe how family foundations can reflect these values in their board governance, management and grantmaking. Foundations can use the principles to discuss issues before they arise, enabling them to proactively develop thoughtful policy and practice that improves over time. Each of the nine principles have related practice options that provide examples of best practices in implementing the principle.

For each principle, you will be asked to rate the Tauck Foundation's current success in employing that principle and its practice options. You will also be asked to rate the importance of addressing each principle at the current time. Because each principle is quite broad and encompasses a range of issues and activities, there is also space for you to comment on specific aspects of a principle and how it relates to the Tauck Foundation.

Thank you for your input.

Liz Tauck Walters
Managing Director
Tauck Foundation

Stewardship Principles Survey Memo 2

Courtesy of the Charles A. Frueauff Foundation

To: CAFF Trustees

From: Anna Kay F. Williams

Date:

Re: Council on Foundations Stewardship Principles

As you all know, Congress is in the active process of taking measures to increase oversight in the nonprofit sector. The Council on Foundations and its membership have been very proactive in this cause.

The Stewardship Principles have arisen for family foundations as a direct result of this.

There are nine principles that fall under three broad areas:

- Governance
- Ethics and Accountability
- Family Legacy

Within each principle several practice options are listed alphabetically. These practice options are offered simply as options to help strengthen performance. The principles and their associated practice options serve as a framework for family foundations and staff. A foundation's asset size, age, staffed/unstaffed, board composition, and governing documents all help determine which practice options are relevant and those that may not apply.

CAFF now has the opportunity to also put forth our best effort and to recognize and acknowledge what we do well while also evaluating and assessing areas that need attention and improvement.

Attached please find the Stewardship Principles document along with a simple but hopefully very useful survey. Please complete and fax the survey to the office prior to our next meeting. The survey only represents the Governance section, the first four principles along with the each principle's practice options. (We will tackle the two remaining sections, Ethics and Accountability and Family Legacy, at later times.)

Please fax your survey to the office no later than ____. Once I have received everyone's survey, I will tally and combine the results to be shared and discussed at the next board meeting. Anonymity will be maintained throughout and the results prepared for the board discussion. **Please bring your copy of the Stewardship Principles and your survey to the meeting**. Holes have been punched in the document to fit in your meeting folder.

Stewardship Principles Survey

Courtesy of the Charles A. Frueauff Foundation

*** *Grading Scale: 1-5 (5 being excellent/most important)*

GOVERNANCE

I. We have a governing board that establishes the mission, guides the operations, oversees the effectiveness and ensures the ethnical conduct of the foundation.

Practice Options:

A. Develop and periodically review the foundation's values and mission statement, strategies, program areas and guidelines, goals, annual and multiyear objectives and geographic focus.

CAFF score: ____________ Importance score: ____________

B. Dedicate sufficient human, financial and technological resources to advance the mission.

CAFF score: ____________ Importance score: ____________

C. Plan for leadership continuity.

CAFF score: ____________ Importance score: ____________

D. Assess the relevance and effectiveness of the foundation's grantmaking, board governance, management and investments.

CAFF score: ____________ Importance score: ____________

Notes or comments: ____

____

____

____

II. Authority is vested in the governing board as a whole, and each member is equipped to advance the foundation's mission.

Practice Options:

[Note: Survey continues with each principle and practice option.]

Governing Body Assessment Questions.

Excerpted from Principled Giving: An Introduction to Corporate Grantmaking Stewardship

Questions to Ask	**Yes**	**Needs Improvement**	**Importance (1 lowest, 5 highest)**
Am I an active, knowledgeable governing body member?			
Do I understand my organization's mission, programs and strategic plan?			
Am I, and is the organization, devoting enough time and resources to help the organization achieve its mission?			
Does the governing body think through decisions jointly or does one lead and the rest follow?			
Do my fellow governing body members and I have the necessary skills to meet our organizations' mission?			
Do I stay current with best practices?			
Do my fellow governing body members and I understand our fiduciary responsibility to the organization?			
Does our organization prepare new governing body members to serve?			
Does my organization set term limits and other guidelines to define appropriate parameters for governing body service?			
Are we making the majority of our grants within our mission?			
Are we using tools and resources other than grants?			
Are we seeking opportunities to align and ally with similar organizations?			
Are we practicing fiduciary responsibilities as required by state and federal law?			
Does my organization comply with all IRS regulations?			

Questions to Ask	Yes	Needs Improvement	Importance (1 lowest, 5 highest)
Do my fellow governing body members and I understand and comply with the self-dealing laws?			
Does my organization identify and deal with possible conflicts of interest?			
Do we know what grantees and other nonprofits think about our grants management process?			
Would I be able to fill out our grant application quickly and easily?			
Do we respond quickly to grantseeker inquiries and submissions?			
Do we make the organizations' mission and who, what and how we fund easily and publicly available?			
Are we prepared to respond to inquiries from the media, grantseekers, public officials and other audiences?			
Are the company's vision, mission, culture and strategies represented in our philanthropic work?			
Do we know where business and community needs intersect?			
Does our philanthropic program have a role in the company's responsibility strategy?			
Do we have programs in place to engage employees in charitable activities?			
Have we developed resources that will help employees be more effective in community engagement?			
Do we engage employees in the grantmaking process?			

Meeting Agenda Template

Adapted from Retreats That Work: Designing and Conducting Effective Offsites for Groups and Organizations, *Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2003*

[Name of Organization]
[Date] [Time] [Place]
[Mission Statement]

Intended Outcomes for This Retreat/Meeting:

By the end of this meeting, we will accomplish the following:

-
-
-

Task	Leader	Time (min)
Connect		
Breakfast		
Check-in, introductions, announcements		
Convene		
Welcoming speech		
Purpose of meeting		
Icebreaker		
Content		
■		
■		
Break		
Continue		
■		
■		
Conclude		
Reflection		
Next steps		

Chapter 3
Finding a Facilitator—or Not

> *"Why use a facilitator? It levels the playing field. People who lead get to participate, and people at odds with the leader don't feel bullied into the agenda or outcome."*
>
> *—Brent Toleman, Strategies Inc., Facilitator*

What Facilitators Add

Your governing body may be perfectly adept and skilled at running its own retreats and meetings. For this reason, you may not consider using an outside facilitator. Yet many of your foundation colleagues recommend that you do. Here's why:

Facilitators:

- **Are skilled at guiding groups.** An outside facilitator has expertise guiding group processes. Unless the chair or one of the members has skills in guiding unstructured group discussion, you should consider engaging the help of an expert.
- **Are objective.** An outside facilitator represents a neutral party, which can help the group reach consensus despite different opinions and agendas.
- **Level the playing field.** Facilitators mitigate the influence of dominant people, helping everyone's voice to be heard.
- **Allow for equal participation of members.** With a hired facilitator, the entire governing body (and staff) can participate fully as members of the group, rather than having to withdraw from discussion to facilitate in a neutral manner.
- **Diffuse conflict.** Sometimes having an outside presence promotes better behavior among a long-established group. Of course, as in any group situation, the possibility for disagreement and conflict is always there. When conflict does erupt, facilitators can be bolder than peers might be. They can name any unproductive behavior as they see it and help move the group toward a constructive conversation.

In This Chapter

- Learn how to find, select and work with a retreat facilitator.
- Plan for how much a facilitator will cost.
- Find tips for planning a retreat on your own—without an outside facilitator.

Many believe that governing body members shouldn't try to facilitate their own meetings or retreats. Others believe it depends on the organization's stage and comfort level. "For a young foundation, it is helpful to have an outside facilitator," said Rayna Aylward, executive director of the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation. "It allows everyone in the foundation to participate and adds credibility when it comes to results." A veteran foundation, she said, might be more comfortable keeping the conversations in-house.

If you do hire a facilitator, consider using a philanthropy consultant or a colleague who is skilled in facilitation. In the end, it doesn't matter *who* the facilitator is, but that he or she is respected by and maintains good chemistry with the group and holds no stake in the outcome.

When people ask philanthropy consultant Anne Hodges Morgan why they need a facilitator, she tells them: "You'll have greater input if you're a participant—not the facilitator. Plus at the end of the day, you'll have a clear idea of what you want to do."

Morgan recommended that organizations look for a facilitator experienced in their kind of work. "Foundations and giving programs need a facilitator who knows their business. It's one thing to run a meeting and another thing to run a retreat."

Facilitators help members communicate with each other to get the work done. According to philanthropy consultant Linda Fisher, "They act as the catalyst, creating a logical structure for the meeting. When you engage the help of a facilitator, it shows members that the leadership is taking the meeting seriously."

Staff and governing body members of foundations and giving programs that have held retreats said they appreciate having an unbiased person at the table. "A facilitator must be willing to name the elephant under the rug—any habits, patterns, things that, for whatever reason, are not discussable," said Philanthropy Consultant Denise Cavanaugh.

Facilitators bring an objective point of view to the group, which can help ensure everyone is heard. They keep the conversation on track, prompt non-participators to speak up and, if necessary, diffuse any conflict or unproductive behavior.

Where to Look

If you do decide to go with a facilitator, first you'll need to find one. The best way to locate a good facilitator is through word of mouth. Ask your foundation colleagues who they use or check these sources:

- Council on Foundations (corporate@cof.org).
- Regional Associations of Grantmakers (www.givingforum.org).
- Local community foundations (www.cflocate.org).
- Journals and trade magazines such as *Foundation News & Commentary* (www.foundationnews.org).
- Charity Channel—provides a paid, online registry system that helps nonprofits locate consultants (www.charitychannel.org).
- Alliance for Nonprofit Management—provides a free online search service of nonprofit consultants and more (www.allianceonline.org).

Selecting a Facilitator

Selecting a facilitator requires four steps: identifying what you want in a facilitator, soliciting proposals, interviewing candidates and, last but not least, checking references.

Start by deciding what you need, then find out who in the field can best help you meet that need.

Often, the key is finding someone who complements your organization's culture and working style. "You have to find one that works well with your dynamic," said Kathleen Odne, executive director of the Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation. Most of the time, it means talking to the facilitator, being clear about what you want and learning more about their experience and how they would work with your organization. Other times it comes down to trusting your own gut instinct.

Most who have used facilitators caution their colleagues to be selective in choosing one. "We found someone who had worked previously with family businesses. We chose her because of her temperament. I thought it would work with our personalities—and it did. She was able to reach our trustees and get them to open up," said Caroline Sabin, executive director of the Powell Foundation in Houston.

What traits should you look for in a facilitator? Of course you want someone with demonstrated experience in facilitating groups—preferably foundations or other nonprofit organizations, depending on your foundation type.

According to Kerry Mellette, president and CEO of the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation, a good facilitator is "open-minded, extremely organized, someone who has presence and confidence, who can take control of the group and handle any diversity or conflict." Although it isn't necessary, she said, it can help if the facilitator also has expertise in the foundation/giving program's focus area.

Once you identify a list of potential candidates, consider drafting a Request for Proposal (RFP) that outlines your needs. (See sample at the end of this chapter.) Even if you don't use an RFP, ask potential consultants to prepare a proposal and work plan for your review. What they prepare for you will give a good sense of their skills and style.

When talking with candidates, consider asking them the following questions:

- How would you work with our organization?
- What is your facilitation style?
- What other experiences have you had (with other groups, corporations or foundations) that might help us?
- What fees do you charge? (Facilitators have different ways of billing for time. Ask about fees for preparation time, retreat facilitation, travel time and summary or follow-up reports.)

Before you hire a facilitator, it's always a good idea to check references—the people who have worked with them before. When you check references, try to find out about the candidate's ability to:

- Help the group get to the desired outcome for the meeting.
- Listen carefully without imposing biases.
- Understand different perspectives and help bring them to the surface.
- Ensure that everyone's voice is heard—even if that means prompting some people to speak up.
- Help the group recognize and confront any unproductive behavior or conflict.
- Analyze and summarize key issues.
- Help the group form an action plan and follow-up activities.

When you are ready to hire a facilitator, you will want to draft a letter of agreement (or ask them to draft it for you) specifying the scope of the work and expectations. Most agreements include:

- Length of work period
- Deadlines
- Fees and payment schedule
- Confidentiality clause
- Termination clause.

As with any agreement you sign, ask your attorney to review it beforehand.

Are Facilitators Contractors or Employees?

A person hired and paid to perform tasks for your organization may be classified as an employee or an independent contractor. Proper classification is important because the organization must withhold and pay employment taxes on behalf of employees. Just calling someone a "consultant" or a "facilitator" doesn't automatically make them an independent contractor. To find out more about IRS classification, visit www.cof.org for a copy of Jane Nober's article *Worker Classification: Do It Before the IRS Does.*

What's All This Going to Cost?

When hiring an outside facilitator, be sure you know exactly how that person charges. Some facilitators charge by the hour, some by the day and others by the project. Some include their expenses in their fee; others don't.

Ask candidates for a proposal that includes a budget for the following: preparation, design and facilitation of the meeting; pre-work/interviewing fees (as applicable); reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses, such as travel and lodging; costs of materials and supplies; fee for writing the meeting summary; and any post-retreat follow-up services.

As a general ballpark figure for a skilled facilitator, you can expect to spend anywhere from $1,500 to $5,000 in fees for a retreat, depending on its length and the amount of pre- and post-work involved.

If you have a corporate foundation, the IRS allows you to incur reasonable expenses necessary for charitable operations. As long as the expenses of the facilitator are reasonable (i.e., in line with what similarly situated organizations are paying for a similar work product) they should be permissible administrative expenses. For more information, see chapter 4, "Practical Matters."

Working with a Facilitator

Before you've hired the facilitator, you will need to discuss and, in most cases, co-create a work plan with the candidate. In general, work plans determine the roles and responsibilities for planning, facilitating and debriefing after the retreat. As you develop a work plan, it helps to discuss the following:

- What pre-work will the facilitator do? Will he or she interview governing body members privately and before the retreat? Will he or she send out written surveys?
- What pre-work will the meeting organizers or planning committee do? Will they be in charge of planning the logistics for the meeting? For communicating with the governing body?
- How will the facilitator work with the meeting organizer or planning committee?
- Who will be in charge of developing the agenda?
- What will be the timeframe for planning and conducting the event?
- What type of follow-up activities will the facilitator do? Will he or she write a meeting summary? Will he or she work with the organization on any next steps?
- What is the role of staff, as applicable, before, during and after the retreat?

It's much better to get these issues out in the open at the start of the planning process. Doing this will help all participants understand their role and avoid any potential misunderstandings along the way.

Expect to share a great deal of background information to help the facilitator prepare. They might ask you for:

- Organizational documents—for example, articles of incorporation and bylaws
- Funding history for the last five years
- Annual reports
- Meeting minutes for the past three years
- Any printed or web materials.

Here are some simple tips for getting the most out of working with facilitators:

- Give them time to prepare thoroughly—time to interview or survey all the members concerning their hopes for the retreat, issues they want discussed, their special concerns, etc.
- Allow them the opportunity to review background documents.
- Share with them (confidentially, if need be) information about potentially explosive dynamics so they can prepare for potential conflicts.
- Help them structure the agenda so that there is sufficient time to conduct the retreat and yet time for that informal interaction.
- Set aside cell phones, pagers and e-mail in the retreat session. Participants should try to put other business on hold, if possible, for the duration of the retreat out of respect for the issues and their colleagues.

Planning without a Facilitator

Of course, outside facilitators may not be right for every organization. For some, an outside presence may feel intrusive in the private discussions. Governing body members may not be as candid with someone else in the room. If your organization prefers to keep its business to itself, consider appointing a few members to plan and organize the retreat and one person to be in charge of facilitating.

It's tricky to balance the roles of facilitator and governing body member, often because the participant has a vested interest in the outcome. Below are some guidelines to follow if you are called to fill these dual roles:

- Clearly define your meeting role for the group. Let them know that you are there to *guide* the process, not participate in or add content to the discussion.
- If you must add to the content or give an opinion, notify the group when you are switching roles and ask someone else to facilitate for a brief time period.
- Be careful not to use your role as a facilitator to move the group toward the outcomes you desire.
- Ask the group to help you facilitate in a fair and balanced way and to tell you when you are not.

Peer Practice:

Using Facilitators

We Hired a Facilitator…

"It's important to use a facilitator when you are taking the longer perspective. They can help you look at the bigger picture, ask questions that might not occur to you and be willing to address touchy subjects."

—Bill Conrad, Executive Director, Stackpole-Hall Foundation

"Facilitators can help introduce potentially uncomfortable discussions. It's when the conversation gets uncomfortable that the growth occurs."

—Richard (Skip) Moore, President, Weaver Foundation

We Did It on Our Own…

"We have worked with a family business consultant/facilitator for more than 10 years who has helped us understand our foundation dynamics and develop our group decisionmaking skills. As a result, the board decided to manage our family foundation retreat internally."

—Liz Tauck Walters, Managing Director, Tauck Foundation

"We don't use facilitators in our meetings with trustees. It would have been difficult to use an outsider in our last meeting because so much of the meeting dealt with our history. Our trustees wouldn't be candid with other people in the room.

—Chris Park, President, Lucent Technologies Foundation

Samples

Facilitator's Job Description

Adapted from Great Meetings! How to Facilitate Like a Pro*, Hansen Park Press, 1997*

A facilitator:

- Plans and designs the meeting process, in partnership with the meeting convener and organizer.
- Helps everyone feel welcome.
- Clarifies the purpose of the meeting, the desired outcomes, the process that will be used and the roles of each person.
- Works with the group to establish and gain buy-in to the ground rules.
- Draws out opinions and encourages full participation from all members.
- Clarifies communication.
- Keeps the group focused and on track.
- Protects participants from attack.
- Provides a safe space for creativity.
- Listens intently and takes notes.
- Handles difficult situations and behaviors.
- Names conflict when it arises and guides those involved through negotiating their differences.
- Adapts the process as necessary to move the group forward.
- Makes process suggestions.
- Encourages the group with affirmation and appreciation.
- Summarizes progress at key points.
- Guides the group in coming to conclusions, agreement, clarity on next steps.
- Maintains neutrality, reflecting content and process back to the group.

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Retreat Facilitator

Adapted from Raffa, P.C. *May 2005*

INTRODUCTION

The ABC Foundation (ABC) is soliciting proposals from philanthropy consultants and professional facilitators to design and facilitate its spring retreat. The retreat will be held in Baltimore, Maryland (exact location TBD), on the weekend of May 21–23.

This request for proposal (RFP) contains background information on ABC and specific information that must be included in the proposals submitted. The proposals must be submitted by no later than 5:00 p.m., February 28, 2007, directly to our office at the following address:

ABC Foundation
1000 Main Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Attn: Susie Johnson

BACKROUND

ABC is a corporate foundation with a mission to help developmentally disabled adults in the Mid-Atlantic United States. The foundation was formed in 1998 by the ABC Company. The board includes eight members—four of whom are corporate employees, three of whom are community members working in the developmentally disabled field and one who is an attorney.

The purpose of the upcoming retreat will be to review Principle III of the Stewardship Principles for Corporate Grantmakers, which states "We consider multiple strategies to further our mission." As part of the retreat, the foundation will evaluate its past and current programs, consider areas of success and possible improvement and consider a range of financial support options as well as technical assistance to grantees and other nonprofits.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Please submit a proposal outlining your and your firm's expertise, working style and a possible work plan for this project. The following items should be specifically addressed in the proposal submitted:

- Experience of the firm, size, location and area of expertise
- Approach to planning the retreat and engaging retreat participants
- Nature and timing of the services
- Fees and estimated expenses
- Three references from previous clients
- Contact information.

The proposal should be no longer than eight pages. Feel free to e-mail the proposal (abc@abcfoundation.org) or send it by hard copy to the address listed below.

SELECTION PROCESS AND TIMING

We will review all proposals based on the criteria outlined above. Those consultants whose proposals are selected for further consideration may be asked to participate in a personal interview with us and/or answer questions before our final selection.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience, but by no later than February 15, if you are going to respond to this request for proposal.

We ask that you forward four (4) copies of the proposal to the address shown below directed to the attention of John Doe. We may, at our discretion, meet with a few final candidates during the week of March 7. We plan to make our selection by no later than March 15 and would expect work to begin at the earliest time thereafter.

CONTACT INFORMATION

All inquiries should be directed to:

Susie Johnson (202/555-5555 or abc@abcfoundation.org)
ABC Foundation
1000 Main Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Letter of Agreement with a Retreat Facilitator

Courtesy of the Council on Foundations

There are many approaches to writing an agreement for a facilitator's services. Below is a sample agreement for hiring a consulting firm. As with any legal document, consult with legal counsel to make sure that the document is tailored to meet the needs of the your organization.

[DATE]

[FIRM NAME
& ADDRESS]

Dear [Contact Name]:

This contract will confirm our understanding of the terms of the work to be performed by your firm for [Foundation name] (the "Foundation"). Your firm's principal contact at the Foundation will be [name]. The work described in this agreement will begin on [date]. All work shall be completed no later than [date].

Contractor Services:

Your firm agrees to perform the following duties in accordance with this Agreement:

[Describe all work to be performed with enough detail to ensure that it is clear from the contract what is being done. Include hours to be worked, a description of all tangible items to be produced, deadlines, any schedule of deliverables, specifications, quality benchmarks, where the work is to be performed, special tools/skills necessary, etc.]

Project Fees and Expenses:

Your firm will be paid at the rate of $[amount] per hour for hours actually worked. In no event shall the total amount due from the Foundation for professional costs under this contract exceed $[total] unless expressly agreed to in advance in writing by the Foundation.

In addition to the hourly fee, the Foundation will pay the following expenses, provided that all such expenses are supported by original documentation:

[Specifically identify approved additional expenses. If the foundation has a travel policy to which it expects consultants to abide, that policy may be attached as a reference and incorporated into the agreement.]

There shall be no charges to the Foundation other than those expenses specifically set forth in this Agreement, unless expressly agreed to in advance in writing by the Foundation.

Total Maximum Contractor Costs **$ [Total]**

Payment Terms and Conditions:

Payment of all undisputed amounts will be made after completion of the work in form and content acceptable to the Foundation and within thirty (30) days of the Foundation's receipt of the following:

[Insert any documentation requirements here. Such documentation may include items such as a detailed invoice and/or original receipts for expenses.]

Independent Contractor Status:

Your firm understands that it is an independent contractor and that nothing in this contract shall create any association, partnership, joint venture or agency relationship between your firm and the Foundation. Unless and to the extent otherwise specified in this contract, your firm shall be responsible for all amounts due for materials in connection with its performance and your firm agrees that it shall be solely responsible for compensation and any and all related taxes due to its employees. Neither your firm nor the Foundation has any right or authority to assume or to create any obligation or responsibility on behalf of the other party.

Indemnification and Insurance:

The Foundation shall assume no liability for any bodily injury, personal injury or property damage resulting from your firm's negligence, malfeasance or non-feasance in performing the work described in this agreement; in this regard, your firm agrees to indemnify and hold the Foundation harmless and to carry adequate liability and other insurance protecting itself against any such claims arising from your firm's negligence, malfeasance or non-feasance.

Warranty:

Your firm warrants that all supervisors, employees and authorized representatives assigned by your firm to perform services under this Agreement shall be fully qualified and specially trained in their respective responsibilities and shall perform the assigned services with care and diligence.

Return of Materials:

In the event of termination of this agreement, the materials produced under this Agreement (including any materials used in preparation of the project described in this agreement) will become the sole property of the Foundation and your firm shall deliver such materials to the Foundation in such form as reasonably requested by the Foundation.

Confidentiality and Nondisclosure:

Your firm agrees to keep confidential and not use or disclose any information acquired in the performance of this Agreement concerning the Foundation, its business, finances, staff or operations.

Ownership and Intellectual Property:

Materials prepared or delivered by your firm to the Foundation under this contract shall be works made for hire created for and owned by the Foundation and are the exclusive property of the Foundation. Your firm hereby assigns all rights and interests in the materials to the Foundation.

Termination:

Neither party shall be liable for failure to perform any or all of the obligations under this agreement to the extent that events beyond such party's reasonable control, such as labor strikes, picketing, acts of God, severe weather, acts of terrorism, civil disturbances, shortages of materials or governmental intervention, materially affect that party's ability to perform. Further, this agreement may be terminated in writing without penalty by either party if such an event occurs.

In the event that the Foundation determines that this arrangement is no longer in the best interest of the Foundation, the Foundation may elect to cancel this contract without penalty on [timeframe (e.g., seven days, one month)] written notice. Outstanding fees or expenses incurred up to the date of receipt of such notice will then be settled by mutual agreement between your firm and the Foundation.

If your firm concurs with the terms of this agreement, please arrange to have the original signed by an authorized party and return them to me. The second copy is for your files.

We look forward to working with your firm on this project.

Sincerely yours,

[Name]

APPROVED: ______________________________ ______________

[Name & Title of Authorized Signer for Foundation] Date

ACCEPTED: ______________________________ ______________

[Name & Title of Authorized Signer for Firm] Date

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Tax Identification Number of Firm

Retreat Announcement

Adapted from Retreats That Work: Designing and Conducting Effective Offsites for Groups and Organizations*, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2003*

To: Governing Body Members of the XYZ Corporate Giving Program

From: Governing Body Chair

I am pleased to announce that Sally Jones of Foundation Facilitators U.S.A. will be leading our upcoming retreat. The purpose of this retreat is to assess and review our effectiveness, using the principles and practice options outlined in the Stewardship Principles for Corporate Grantmakers.

Sally will help us perform a purposeful self-examination and make decisions about how we can improve our operations. Her work with us will consist of three phases:

1) **Pre-work:** Sally will work with the giving program's executive director, Bob Bean, to design a survey that will be distributed to you before the retreat. She will tabulate the results of the survey to learn what you identify as the most critical governance issues.
2) **Retreat:** Sally will guide us through a two-day retreat, which will include one evening meal and guest speaker (TBD).
3) **Follow-up:** Sally will develop a retreat summary report, which will be distributed to all members, and continue to work with Bob on the action plan we mutually create at the retreat.

During the pre-work phase, Sally will interview the staff and everyone who will be attending the retreat. If you are called for an interview, please respond candidly to her questions. Sally will respect your confidence and will not disclose to anyone—not even to me—any comments that could be attributed to a specific individual. She will share her comments with us as a summary only.

The second phase of this initiative will be a two-day off-site retreat held at the Doubletree Hotel in Phoenix, AZ, February 20–21. We will send you a detailed retreat package, with all the logistics, one month before the date.

I look forward to everyone taking part in this retreat with an open mind and a commitment to the XYZ corporate giving program. If you have any questions or suggestions for the retreat, please contact me anytime at governingbodychair@xyz.com or Sally at sally@foundationretreatsusa.com.

Thank you and see you soon.

CHAPTER 4
Practical Matters

"There's something about going off-site that frees people. Some people bloom when they are away from the board table."

—Kathleen Odne, Executive Director, Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation

How Long Should the Retreat Last?

Retreats can be as short as three hours or as long as three days. To determine the right length of time for your retreat, first ask yourselves: What do we want to accomplish? What's our best guess at how long that will take?

Consider the nature and complexity of the issues at hand, as well as the culture and communication style of your organization. For a governing body that works well together, an ideal retreat time may be one day.

If the group has the time for an overnight stay, it can allow for even more reflection and discussion time. Overnight retreats give the opportunity for some informal downtime together and a chance to process the retreat over a couple days. Some organizations even plan retreats over a weekend, beginning Friday evening and ending Sunday at midday.

Of course, overnight or weekend stays may not be feasible for some governing body members—for example, for those who have small children or who are caring for an elderly parent. When determining a retreat's schedule and location, be sure to make choices with respect for the participants' outside personal and professional commitments.

If governing body members cannot commit to a full retreat that lasts two or three days, consider holding a series of small retreats over a certain period of time (see sidebar). In the interest of time, some organizations also plan retreats around their regular meeting schedule. Keep in mind, though, that too much time together may be less of a good thing. "We held our retreat over a long weekend with a regular board meeting tacked on at the end. It was exhausting," said Caroline Sabin, executive director of the Powell Foundation. "If we were going to do it again, I would hold the business meeting first or hold the retreat as a separate event."

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Plan the retreat logistics.
- Learn what to look for in a retreat location.
- Think about what you'll need on site—audiovisual, meals, supplies, etc.
- Consider money matters.

Peer Practices:

A Series of Mini Retreats

Can't get your governing body to commit to one full day? Consider holding your retreat over a series of separate events. "Because the members of our new committee had such a heavy travel schedule, we had a hard time getting them to commit to a full-day retreat for their orientation (Principle II.E.). We knew, though, that we could get them to come to dinner," said Tracy Souza, executive director of the Cummins Corporate Social Responsibility. Souza planned the retreat by spreading it out—six dinners over a period of about four months. It worked, she said, because all of the committee members lived in the same geographical area.

Souza planned the dinners as social events with a purpose. Each focused on a certain topic (e.g., education, history of the community, past funding practices) and included a community leader or content expert who gave a presentation. "In advance of each dinner, I sent the committee an agenda and short bio of the guest speaker. At the end of the series, we had a final dinner with committee members only where they identified what they had learned and what priorities they wanted to pursue.

Spouses were invited to the dinners and each ended at 8 p.m. sharp. Souza said the dinner series was incredibly effective. It helped, she said, to invite spouses along and to end on time. "Looking back, I'm not sure we would have been able to accomplish all we did in a one-day retreat. Sometimes you have to think outside of the box."

Where Should We Have the Retreat?

Choose a retreat location for convenience, value and conduciveness to the work that will be done. If possible, a retreat should be held outside of the office or typical conference room setting. A different environment changes the rhythm of what you do, creating a more relaxed, informal atmosphere that leads to creative thinking and interacting.

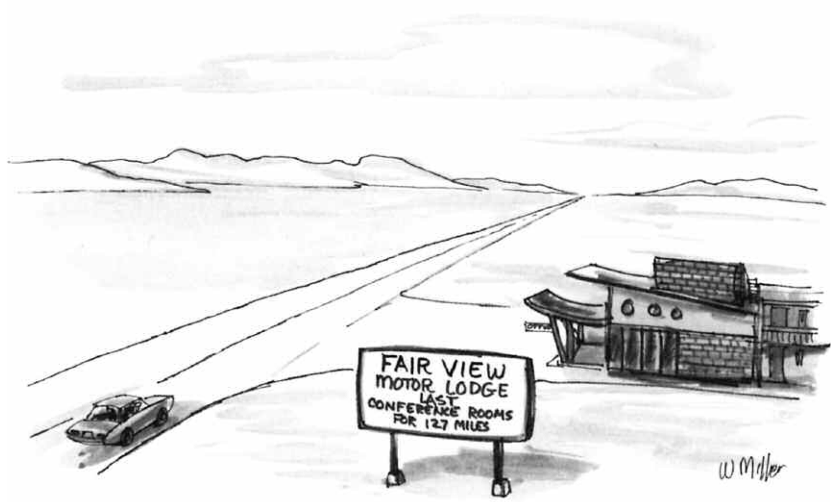
Whether you meet around a dinner table or at a hotel meeting room in an easily accessible city, make sure to plan your retreat in a location that not only offers appropriate space but also meets your other needs. Some location options include:

- Hotel conference rooms.
- Campgrounds or lodges at state or national parks.
- Community centers, libraries or nature centers.
- Meeting spaces in nonprofits or civic organizations (which may have meeting spaces available for free or a small fee).
- Resorts (off-season is usually cheaper and less crowded).
- A governing body member's home. When you need a location on short notice and cost is paramount, this can be the way to go.
- Corporate boardrooms and retreat centers.

You might also plan a retreat around a particular event or a location that ties to your mission. For example, an organization with a mission of environmental conservation might hold its retreat at an eco-friendly site. Or, if you plan to include site visits to grantees as a part of your retreat, choose a location that is central to them.

In addition to the meeting site, rooms themselves can determine how a meeting goes. For example, if a room without windows seems claustrophobic, participants may feel stifled or hemmed in. Similarly, if the room is too wide open, the group may lose some of its intimacy.

Tip: When you have access to a flexible space, move the tables around to create an open circle, like a horseshoe or half-moon, where everyone can have eye contact.



The Right Site

Look for a retreat or meeting facility that is:

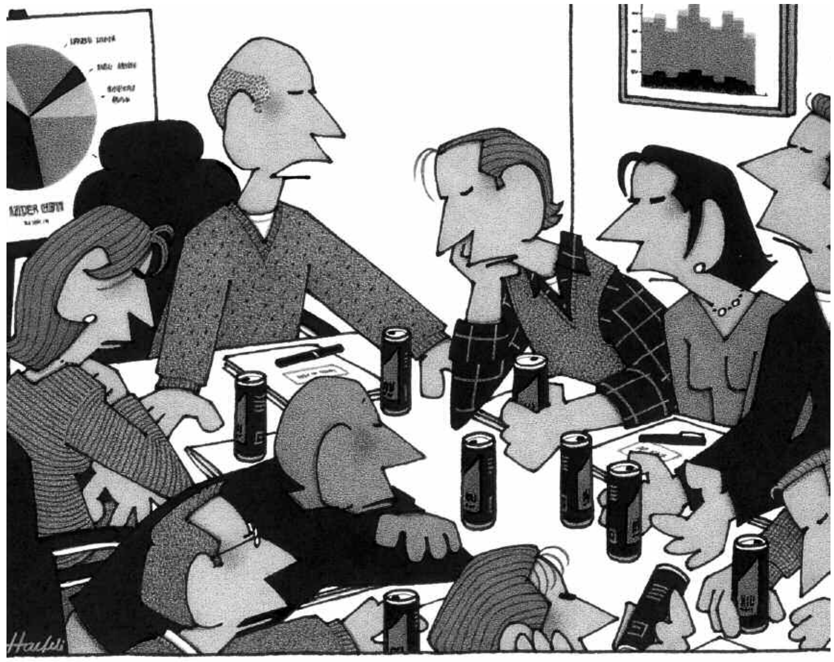
- **Soundproof**—You don't want to spend your day listening to music or applause from another meeting next door.
- **Spacious**—The meeting room should be large enough for participants to break away into separate groups (or have smaller rooms nearby), but not so big as to lose the intimacy of the group as a whole.
- **Reasonably priced**—As always, carefully consider how your dollars are spent.
- **Comfortable**—It should have movable, padded chairs (or sofas if you want it to be cozy), tables with plenty of working space and good lighting. Hotels are notorious for pumping up their air conditioners. Wherever your retreat will be held, find out how hot or cold the room is in advance and how much control you will have over the thermostat.
- **Accessible**—Ideally, the site will offer a courtyard or grounds where participants can congregate informally or take a time out from the group. Check to see if the site is near social or recreational activities, if that is an important part of the group's culture. And the site should be accessible to handicapped or special needs individuals, as needed for your group.
- **Accommodating**—It offers snacks and drinks all day, good meals and clean facilities.
- **Equipped**—The facility should have available the technology and supplies you require (Internet access, projection equipment, flip charts, etc.).

Booking the Meeting

When planning a meeting at an off-site location, you will work with vendors who provide the products and services for your meeting or retreat. They may include (but aren't limited to) hotels, airlines and ground transportation or destination management companies. Be prepared to answer their questions, which might include any of the following:

- Who are your attendees?
- Where do they come from?
- What are the dates and are the dates flexible?
- What is the agenda?
- What are the food and beverage requirements?
- What are your audiovisual needs?
- What is your budget?

Meals and Breaks



"I'll wait a moment for everyone's energy drink to kick in."

Let's face it: Sometimes, food can make or break your event. People care about the food they eat, and, especially in a long meeting, look forward to breaks and mealtimes. Breaking bread together helps everyone relax, enjoy and build a camaraderie that may or may not be there to begin with.

Food eases people into a meeting—whether it's coffee and muffins to start the day or a sit-down dinner that sets a tone for the evening. For people who have been traveling to get to the retreat, this social time will help them de-stress before getting down to business. Plus it offers a chance for the governing body to reconnect with each other—to catch up socially so they won't be distracted during the main event.

When planning full meals for the group, be sure to inquire about everyone's dietary restrictions, if any, in advance. As a general rule, avoid heavy or rich foods at the start or midpoint of a retreat. Big meals can be tasty at the time but put people into nap mode.

Here's a tip if you are planning an evening out: Some restaurants can be loud and distracting. If you plan to meet in a restaurant, be sure to request a quiet section or separate room. Allow everyone to enjoy their meal first, and then call the group's attention to the discussion at hand.

In addition to mealtime, plan some breaks between sessions or activities. Breaks give participants time to make phone calls, check their messages and in general, take care of themselves. It's nice to offer some refreshments during breaks. You don't need to serve anything exotic or extravagant, but you should serve *something*. Hot and cold drinks can be a good pick-me-up, and a combination of sweet, salty and nutritious foods will help please most everyone. Some ideas are popcorn, pretzels, whole fruit, granola bars, cookies, fresh lemonade, fruit punch, soft drinks, coffee and tea—and, unless you want a thirsty bunch on your hands, plenty of bottled water.

A Surplus of Supplies

Don’t forget to have plenty of supplies on hand. Depending on what group activities the facilitator has planned, make sure to have the following:

- Flip-chart paper and/or butcher paper (comes in long, sturdy rolls)
- Non-bleed markers (in different colors)
- Heavy-duty masking tape
- Magic markers or crayons for small groups
- Paper, pens or pencils for each participant
- Extra copies of the agenda or schedule of events
- Stars or dots, which can be used for voting or highlighting key topics
- Water and mints or candy at each table—a nice touch.

You might not use all of these supplies at your event. But it helps to have them nearby in case you need them.

Corporate Foundations: Money Matters

What is the right amount to spend on a foundation retreat? The Tax Code rules that govern private foundations provide some guidance in this area.

Under the Tax Code, expenses relating to a retreat that considers the charitable programs and governance of a private foundation will be considered administrative expenses. The Code allows foundations to make these expenditures and to count them toward their required annual minimum distribution (familiarly known as “the 5 percent payout”) so long as they are “reasonable and necessary.” If any portion of the retreat addresses investment issues, expenses relating to that portion will not count toward the 5 percent payout (but may be used to offset the foundation’s investment income). Furthermore, so long as the payments for retreat expenses are reasonable and necessary (and not excessive), foundation managers will not commit acts of self-dealing by accepting these benefits.

What are “reasonable and necessary” expenses? They are expenses that are necessary for the foundation's operation and reasonable in amount. If that definition does not clarify the issue for you, do not feel alone; determining what appropriate expenses are is difficult and depends on assessment of the foundation's activities and finances. Remember, too, that what seems reasonable and necessary to one group of people may seem stingy or lavish to others. We often suggest that foundation managers consider whether they would feel comfortable justifying a particular expenditure to the IRS, a state attorney general or the local newspaper before they undertake it.

If your foundation has developed a travel policy, the expenses of the retreat should fall within its bounds. If your foundation has not developed a travel policy, we strongly encourage you to do so; an article on developing a travel policy is included on page 59. A travel policy will set parameters for transportation and meal costs as well as hotel rates and miscellaneous expenses.

The foundation should generally not pay the travel expenses of individuals who accompany trustees but have no official position or duties for the foundation. Under the Tax Code, these individuals are most likely “disqualified persons” and the foundation may not make payments to or for their benefit. Such payments could be considered acts of self-dealing and subject the foundation to penalty taxes. Although an exception to the self-dealing rules allows the foundation to pay the travel and meeting expenses of board members, this exception does not apply to disqualified persons who have no official role in the foundation's work. Some foundations choose to pay family members' travel expenses and treat such payments as taxable compensation to the trustees; this may be permissible so long as the total amount of all compensation received by the trustee is reasonable.

Consult your lawyer or accountant with specific questions about expenditures in this area.

Samples

Planning Checklist

Adapted from Great Meetings! How to Facilitate Like a Pro*, Hansen Park Press, 1997*

- Decide on the appropriate length for the retreat (ask the facilitator, if you hire one, for recommendations).
- Determine when the facilitator is available.
- Check availability of the governing body members, senior staff or others whose presence is needed at the meeting.
- Select a comfortable retreat location and determine when it can host your organization.
- Announce the retreat and give participants two or three options for dates.
- Contract with the retreat facility for the dates you choose.
- Arrange for food and any other social activity.
- Develop/select group exercises.
- Develop a detailed retreat agenda with timeframes.
- Make arrangements for transportation, meals, lodging and any required audiovisual needs.
- Announce the dates of the retreat and provide participants with the information they need including:
  - Agenda and any pre-work assignments
  - Lodging arrangements
  - Directions to the site
  - Recreational options, if any
  - Dress code (usually casual)
  - Contact information for where they can be reached by colleagues or family members.
- Ask invitees to confirm their participation and indicate any food preferences or limitations.
- Develop presentation materials.
- Prepare the room.
- Start the day.

Timeline Tip

When developing your timeline for planning, use your meeting date as a starting point and work backward. Write a list of all the major tasks and pencil in due dates. Add new tasks to the timeline as you identify them.

CHAPTER 5
The Main Event

"Begin the day with something real—a discussion or activity where everyone talks."

—Denise Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Hagan & Pierson Inc.

Starting the Retreat

There's an old saying that bears repeating: If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else. This is true for retreats and meetings. Governing body members need to be clear on the meeting's purpose and understand what they are there to do.

Many meetings, however, aren't planned with the participants' interests in mind. When convening any meeting, always consider the perspective of the people attending. What do they want to get out of it? Why are they choosing to attend? What do they need to know as soon as they arrive?

Do your job to make sure the participants show up armed with information. For example, send the information on the retreat at least two weeks in advance. Be sure to inform them of any reading or pre-work so that they can come prepared.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Learn how to plan retreats with the participants in mind.
- Start the retreat by breaking the ice.
- Set ground rules.
- Choose the right group activity to advance retreat goals.

In addition to passing out copies of the agenda, which you may have done in advance, it also helps to list an agenda summary (with approximate times) on a flip-chart sheet taped to the wall. This way, members will have a visual display of the tasks and timeframes to refer to throughout the day.

Typically, the foundation/giving program CEO or executive director will start the meeting. He or she will welcome everyone, discuss the purpose for the retreat or meeting, and either introduce the facilitator or turn the meeting over to the staff person serving as the facilitator.

The facilitator (or staff person, as the case may be) will then frame the agenda for the day. He or she will define everyone's roles, remind people of the benefits of being there and answer the questions everyone wants to know. (See sidebar.)

What People Want to Know Up Front

When you walk into a retreat or meeting room, what's on your mind? Everyone wants answers to their most common questions—and the sooner the better. Be sure that these questions are answered at the start of the meeting:

- Why are we meeting?
- How will this advance our mission?
- Will this be a good use of my time?
- What's on the agenda?
- How long will this take?
- What is my role? What's expected of me?
- Will I have to talk/present/perform in front of the group?
- When will we take a break?
- Where is the food?
- Where is the bathroom? Phones? E-mail access?
- What are we going to do for fun?

Do your best to address these questions in the first 15 minutes of the meeting. You might even include a set of frequently asked questions (FAQ) in the retreat agenda or meeting packet. This will help you save time as you start the meeting.

Peer Practice:

Start Socially

"We started our retreat with a Friday evening dinner. It was informal and gave trustees a bit of bonding time. After the meal, we talked about themes for the meeting and our expectations and concerns. We went over the meeting agenda, set ground rules and reaffirmed our foundation's values."

—Caroline Sabin,
Executive Director,
Powell Foundation

Breaking the Ice

Next it's time to get people talking.

Many facilitators recommend starting the meeting with an icebreaker or two. Icebreakers are quick exercises to help members warm up, speak up and start interacting.

For example, a facilitator might ask each person to tell the group something new about themselves. Even when members think they know each other well, sometimes the answers will surprise the group.

According to facilitator Linda R. Fisher, "What's most important about an icebreaker is that everyone says something—anything. It's like getting your oar in the water. It doesn't matter what people say, but just gets the ball rolling."

One of the tricks of an icebreaker is timing. It should not be too long; otherwise, the serious work of the meeting will not be given enough time. It should not be so short that participants feel it was a waste of time. Timing depends on the size of the group, the overall length of the event and the purpose of the event. For example, an all-day retreat might warrant a half-hour icebreaker, but a one-hour meeting may call for only a minute or two.

When planning an icebreaker activity, select a few non-intrusive questions that help people open up. Here are some ideas:

- What's been a high point of your day [or week]?
- Tell us some good news in your life?

- If you weren't here today, what would you rather be doing?
- How did you spend your last (or plan to spend your next) vacation?

Or you might focus more on retreat-related issues:

- What matters to you most about the foundation/giving program?
- What aspect of the organization's work are you the most proud of?
- What's your highest hope for this meeting?
- What is one burning question you hope will be answered at this retreat?
- Choose one word from our mission statement—what does it mean to you and why?

Peer Practice:

Convening Community Members—Principle III.J.

"Every five years or so, we hold a retreat to get proactive on the issues in our funding area and how they have changed. We examine whether there should be a shift in our focus based on community needs. For these meetings, we engage community people in the discussion—bring in representatives from the community, discuss their perspective and how that affects our mission."

—Bill Conrad, Executive Director, Stackpole-Hall Foundation

For more thoughtful questions related to the organization, it helps to give participants a few minutes to silently collect their thoughts before they speak or even have them write their ideas down. This brief pause in the discussions will encourage more interesting responses from all.

Tip: Icebreakers aren't just for the beginning of a meeting—they also work for helping the group reconvene after lunch or the next day.

Setting Ground Rules

The concept of ground rules is based on a fairly simple principle: that everyone involved in the meeting should be treated equally and fairly. Ground rules explicitly state accepted behavior and procedures that people normally consider fair but sometimes abandon in a group dynamic. By establishing ground rules at the onset, the group will have an opportunity to discuss what constitutes good behavior. It will also help them feel more ownership over the meeting.

Your organization may already have existing ground rules—a values statement, for example—that you can reference. Or you might need to develop ground rules on the spot.

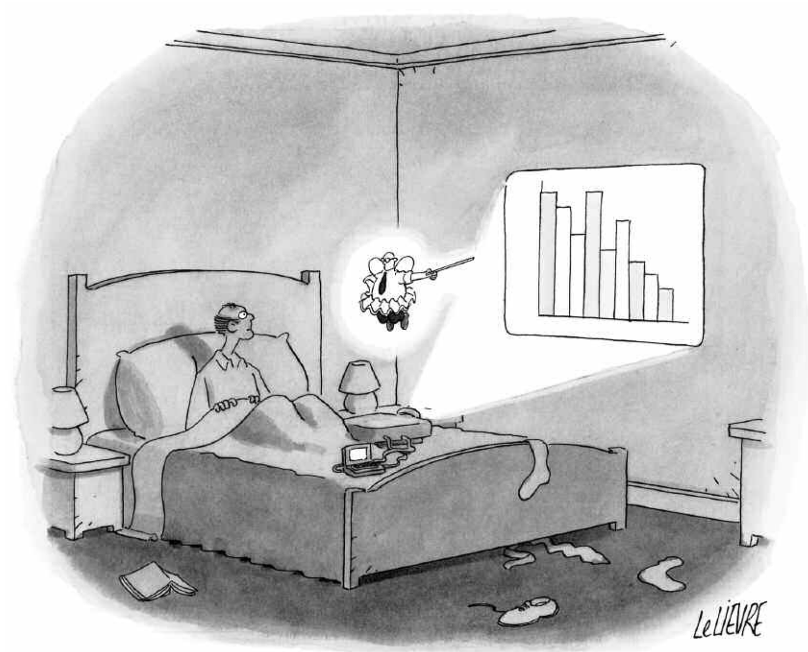
You may find that some members resist establishing ground rules, either because it takes time away from the "real work" or it feels childish to define good behavior. Remind them that retreats are a means to an end and that the process is important. Ground rules establish a way of communicating and relating to each other that everyone agrees to. This makes the "real work" easier to do.

For most groups, it isn't necessary to devote more than five or ten minutes to a ground rules discussion. You might start by asking for suggestions for ground rules and encouraging members to be as specific as possible. Examples of ground rules might be:

For example, we will:

- Speak respectfully to each other.
- Listen without judgment.
- Explore different interests.
- Allow people to finish their statements without interruption.

- Debate ideas, not individuals.
- View all members as problem-solvers.
- Stay on task.
- Take breaks.
- Use constructive criticism.
- Arrive on time and stay to the end.
- Have a sense of humor.



The Night Before the Big Meeting Frank Receives a Visit from the PowerPoint Fairy.

Choosing Group Activities

Once you establish the ground rules, it's time to get underway with the work itself. Often the "work" at retreats is disguised in the form of group activities and exercises that get people thinking.

The primary reason for including group activities is this: Adults have surprisingly short attention spans. It's hard to keep people's attention through a retreat that lasts more than a couple hours. After about ten minutes of continuous input, people simply don't absorb information at the same pace. Their minds drift off to other things—scribbling a to-do list, recalling a recent golf game, wondering how many hours it will be until it's time to eat.

Studies on adult education have shown that people respond better when there is a mix of teaching approaches and interactivity, such as role-play, questionnaires, small discussion groups and visual aids. The good news is there are plenty of group activities out there that you can use to keep people's minds on the task at hand.

Understand that the group activities that work best depend on your organization's culture and your goals for the meeting. Some activities help identify ideas and issues; others help analyze a specific problem. If you have a facilitator, ask them which activities to use. If you are running the meeting yourself, choose your activity based on the type of work that needs to be done. Before selecting an activity, ask yourselves:

1) Where is the group in the problem-solving process?

2) What are the factors influencing the group right now?

3) What is the size of the group?

4) What is the comfort level of the group? Is there a good introvert/extrovert mix?

5) What is the power dynamic? Is the group laid-back or aggressive?

6) Is the group high or low energy or in between?

You know your group best. Some of the activities listed here may appeal to your governing body, and others won't. Select the ones that the governing body will be comfortable with and that will accomplish what you want to do. These are simply ideas to get you started—they aren't step-by-step instructions.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming works any time a group needs to come up with a list of ideas as part of its problem-solving process. For example, in a retreat that focuses on Principle III ("Consider multiple strategies to further our mission"), governing body members might brainstorm ways that the organization could collaborate and/or meet with others.

There are dozens of variations on how to capture ideas during brainstorming. The most common way is to use a flip chart, a large piece of paper stuck to the wall or individual sticky notepads. Ask members to generate a free-flowing list of ideas in response to a certain question (for example, "In what ways can we collaborate with other funders? Around what issues could we convene other community leaders, funders and nonprofits?"). The brainstorming can focus on almost any topic as well: current challenges, potential solutions, cause and effect, values and ideals, or next steps. Ask the group to hold off on any discussion or judgment until after the full list is complete.

Mind Mapping

Mind mapping helps to break down a problem or issue, showing the causes, effects and relationships between topics. It can also be used to break down a task into smaller steps.

To begin the exercise, draw a circle on a large piece of paper and write a word inside, representing an issue (e.g., "Technical Assistance to Grantees"). Draw separate lines (or circles) off the main circle and label them with different aspects of the issue (e.g., possible types of technical assistance, challenges, rewards, resources, time requirements). Add new ideas as they are called out and add new lines with related ideas as spokes off those lines.

Miracle Question

If you could have one wish or could fix one thing, what would it be? This tool encourages the group to frame the situation positively and focus on how they want things to be instead of how they are now. The group should be as specific as possible in what they wish and not get caught up in how it would get done or excuses for why it can't happen.

Driving Forces

This is a good tool for identifying forces that could create a possible change. Use this one when the governing body is considering starting a new program or grantmaking initiative. To start, create a chart with two columns, labeled "driving forces" (factors that work toward the change) and "restraining forces" (factors that work against the change). Brainstorm the specific factors to go in each of these columns and examine the list. Ask the group to choose two or three of the driving forces and discuss how they could strengthen those forces toward the desired change. Next, choose two or three restraining forces and identify ways to minimize their negative effects on the desired change.

History Map

This exercise helps members connect with the organization's history to inform future action (Principle VIII.A). Ask the governing body to create what's called a history map—a visual chart that plots significant events chronologically (sometimes known as a Grove Chart—see www.grove.com). On a long piece of butcher paper, create a timeline of the organization's history—starting with the date it began and ending with today's date. Fill in some significant events, but then invite members to come in and add phrases or pictures at different points on the timeline. This exercise can be effective for stirring memories and showing how people will have a different perspective on what was important to them. It also starts the meeting in a positive way by illustrating how much has been accomplished already.

Significant Stories

For this exercise, small groups are asked to tell the story of a recent or past event inside the organization that they believe illustrates an important part of the organization's culture (Principle III). After the small groups report out, everyone discusses their reactions to the stories and what they learned.

Planning for the Unexpected

This exercise helps the group plan ahead in the event of a crisis and the need for leadership continuity (Principle I.C.). To start, the leader steps out of the room and the facilitator announces that the leader has died, or for whatever reason, cannot continue leading the organization. The group must then work together to figure out what they would need to do in the midst of the crisis and beyond.

Newspaper Article

This tool helps the group create a vision for the future. Ask small groups to write a newspaper article about the organization they hope will be reported in the future. Members of the group can brainstorm what should go in the article, as well as its headline. The small groups then come back together and present their ideas to the group as a whole, comparing similarities and differences.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is a good tool for analyzing the current situation both internally and externally. It helps to provide baseline information for a group that wants to envision the future or analyze a problem. Ask the group to identify its internal strengths and weaknesses and its external opportunities and threats.

Grouping

This tool helps organize a lot of ideas into larger categories or themes. Ask each member to write down ideas on a sticky notepad (one idea per sticky note) and tape them to the wall or in the middle of a table. When all the ideas are on the wall, ask the members to group and reorder the ideas without talking. The process continues until no one wants to make any further moves. Then the group discusses their areas of agreement and disagreement.

Breakout Groups

Divide the group into smaller subgroups and ask each team to discuss either the same issue or separate issues and take notes on their discussion. The team will assign a leader to present its findings to the main group.

Peer Practice:

Mapping History—VIII

"We used a Grove chart [a.k.a. history map], allowing us to plot significant events chronologically. The facilitator and I plotted seminal moments, but we asked board members to plot what they thought was important. For us, it was a way of seeing that we've really done a lot. We were able to see our accomplishments graphically rather than by how much money the foundation has given."

What Happens When…?

In any group situation, things can go haywire pretty fast. If you've hired a skilled professional as your facilitator, hopefully he or she will be adept at handling these situations. If you are facilitating the meeting yourself, you will need to be prepared for when things go wrong—so that you can steer them right again.

Watch for these warning signs:

- People aren't taking the retreat seriously
- One or a few members dominate the discussion
- The group keeps wandering off task
- Members seem to have low energy
- People continually depart throughout the day
- One person continually disrupts the conversation
- Someone violates the ground rules
- Someone refuses to participate or walks out
- An intense argument erupts.

If these or any other unproductive behaviors occur, you can use a variety of tactics to get the meeting back on track. Consider these tips that will help keep the flow:

- Remind members why they are there and how much this process means to the organization's effectiveness.
- Make sure all participants know their role.
- If anyone has to leave early, ask that he or she lets the group know at the beginning of the day.
- Remind everyone to stay focused on the agenda and avoid jumping ahead.
- If some people dominate the discussion, encourage others to speak up: "Steve, what do you think?"
- If the group is too large for discussion, ask that members raise their hand before speaking.
- When the meeting steers off topic, make a process check to redirect the discussion to the topic at hand.
- If one person keeps going off track, ask the person to relate his or her point to the topic at hand.
- Create a list you call the "parking lot"—ideas that are unrelated or unproductive to the discussion at hand but useful to remember for later.
- Refer back to the ground rules when needed and reaffirm the group's agreement.
- When members seem tired or punchy, take a quick break, encouraging them to stretch or go for a walk.
- If someone walks out, ask if anyone would be willing to go talk to them and listen to their concerns.
- Abandon any activity that isn't relevant or contributing to a positive outcome and suggest a new tack.

More Participation, Please.

Do you find some people moan and groan when it's time for group activities? Here are a few hints for keeping your members enthused and engaged:

- Give immediate positive feedback on participation.
- Acknowledge the value of all behaviors that serve the group.
- Use a variety of interactive exercises and visual aids.
- Show everyone respect.
- Allow people time to think.
- Emphasize the "no dumb questions" rule.
- Where appropriate, ask people to write their ideas first and then discuss.
- Laugh, play, make it fun.
- Allow members to draw their own conclusions.

Dealing with Conflict

Successful retreats sometimes involve dealing with some disagreement, dispute or difference of opinion. If no conflict emerges, chances are participants aren't being honest with themselves or others, or the retreat has focused on issues that aren't of great concern to them. Conflict is a natural part of all human relationships and a dynamic in all group settings. When treated as an opportunity for growth and creativity, it can be a positive experience leading to great outcomes. Don't ignore or dismiss it. Instead, find ways to manage conflict so that it can be explored openly.

Here are some steps for handling conflict as it arises:

- Distinguish between healthy disagreements and inappropriate levels of conflict—for example, do disagreements generate good discussion or impede the meeting's effectiveness?
- Name the source of the conflict as you see it and ask the group to do the same—for example, conflict may come from miscommunication, different needs or interests, differences in values or beliefs, or an ineffective structure.
- Refer back to the ground rules and any that are relevant to conflict—examples might include "attack the problem, not the person," "no interrupting," "speak your truth," etc.
- Look for common ground, such as desiring a good working relationship, meeting the mission, serving the community, etc.
- Affirm that it's okay to have different values and opinions.
- Take a break—when it seems the group is getting nowhere, take a short breather for everyone to restore calm.

A Little Humor Goes a Long Way

People learn best in an environment that is friendly, informal and often humorous. Humor can be a great way to alleviate any tension that arises in a group situation. A good laugh can clear the air and help everyone refocus on the task at hand. It can also be used to build rapport among members, making the retreat or meeting both effective and fun. Need some tips for using humor at meetings? Try including cartoons in the board handbooks or start each meeting with a playful icebreaker. (See www.meetingwizard.org for ideas.)

Samples

Retreat Agenda—One Day

Adapted from the Tauck Foundation

Principle VIII

Our philanthropic activities are aligned with the company's vision, mission, values, culture and strategies.

Principle IX

We provide opportunities for the company's employees to participate in charitable activities, recognizing that benefits accrue to the employees, the company and the community.

TAUCK FOUNDATION SPRING RETREAT

Saturday, May 21, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

8:30–8:45	REVIEW OF AGENDA & GOALS
8:45–10:45	SHARING PERSPECTIVES ON PAST 5 YEARS & FUTURE

DIRECTIONS

10:45–11:00	BREAK
11:00–12:30	BRAINSTORM GOALS FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
12:30–1:30	LUNCH
1:30–2:30	REFINING OUR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
2:30–3:30	ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: INCENTIVES AND RECOGNITION
3:30–3:45	BREAK
3:45–4:30	NEXT STEPS

New Member Orientation Retreat

Adapted from Retreats That Work: Designing and Conducting Effective Offsites for Groups and Organizations, *Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2003*

Location: Doubletree Hotel Conference Facilities

Date/Time: August 15, 20XX, 8:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.

Objective: To introduce new members to the foundation, its current trustees and board processes

> **PRINCIPLE II.E.**
> Provide comprehensive orientation and training for governing board members.

8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00	Welcoming remarks Chair introduces board members, executive director and facilitator Veteran trustees introduce background and history of the foundation Questions and answers
10:00	Executive director introduces overview of program, grant guidelines, grantees and staff structure Questions and answers
10:45	Chair presents board member responsibilities and role of the board Clarification of expectations Group activity/small group discussion
12:15	Lunch
1:30	Introduction to teamwork; role playing
2:30	Coffee break
3:00	Legal counsel presents legal and fiduciary duties
3:45	Chair presents board processes and structure
4:30	Wrap-up; questions and sharing of first impressions
5:00	Free time
6:00	Gathering for social dinner Guest speaker on good governance

CHAPTER 6
Next Steps

> *"Every retreat should have a paper trail and a work plan."*
>
> *—Denise Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Hagan & Pierson Inc.*

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Create an action plan for next steps.
- Assess the effectiveness of the retreat.
- Distribute a meeting summary.
- Reinforce retreat outcomes.
- Learn from your colleagues.

Creating an Action Plan

As with any meeting, it's important to properly "wrap up" what happened at the retreat and create a plan for what will happen next.

Before ending the retreat, the facilitator should guide the group toward a specific—and significant—plan of action. This can be one of the most challenging parts of the retreat. A group often needs to make tough decisions to focus their future work, while acknowledging and valuing the wide range of opinions and suggestions that came out during the retreat.

Developing an action plan can take several hours, so be sure not to hold it to the last few minutes. At this point, you'll be getting toward the end of the retreat, and everyone's energy will be waning. Remind the group that there is still important work to be done.

The best way to capture what needs to be done is to record ideas on a flip chart or notepad throughout the retreat. "If done well, there are flip-chart records that document specific decisionmaking along the way," said retreat facilitator Brent Toleman. "At the end of a retreat, I list key elements around what the group has coalesced on and key problems to work on. This is the basis for creating the plan."

Ideally, there will be a collective sense of next steps at the closing of a retreat, and the group will need to delegate responsibility. If appropriate, assign action items to standing committees or form new ones to work on special tasks.

It's critical that governing body members feel committed to the next steps that evolve from the retreat—even if their personal suggestions are not fully represented in the final action plan. The governing body may have to rank its priorities in order of importance. A simple ranking exercise can help. For example, list various ideas on a flip chart and give participants three self-sticking dots (available in any office supply store) to rank their top priorities. When everyone has finished posting the dots, the group will easily be able to see the items ranked the highest. Invite participants to share reasons for why they voted the way they did.

As the governing body is deciding its priorities, consider these factors:

- Potential impact on mission and goals
- Potential impact on the community
- Interest in (or enthusiasm for) the action

- Time required
- Resources needed.

Keep in mind that it's far better to leave a retreat with a few well-thought-out initiatives and an agreement on how the governing body will achieve them than with a long drawn-out list of detailed action steps people will hardly remember.

A simple action plan is often the best action plan. Here's an idea: On a large piece of paper, create four columns with the headings: "What," "By Whom," "By When" and "Why Is It Important?" Use this chart to generate a list of actions and individuals committed to those actions. Generate discussion for the action plan by asking the group:

- What results do we want to achieve? Why?
- What needs to be done to achieve the result?
- Who will commit to each specific task to achieve the result?
- When will these tasks be completed?
- What obstacles must we overcome to achieve each task?
- How will we know that we have achieved the result?

It's important that an action plan focus on real action—not just a plan to think about more actions. Remind the group that their answers should be brief but clear. Try to get members to specify tasks and commitment that will lead to meaningful change.

Tip: Using a Flip Chart

This will save you time. If the retreat lasts longer than a day, review and consolidate the flip-chart notes at the end of the first day. Post the summary on the wall for day two. You can then refer to these points when developing an action plan.

Assessing the Retreat

At the end of the meeting, go back to the beginning. Take a look at the intended purpose for the meeting and assess how close the group came to getting there. Some facilitators end retreats with a closing exercise that allows the group to reflect on the work they've done together. For example, the facilitator might distribute a copy of the Stewardship Principle(s) addressed at the retreat and ask the group to rate what has changed because of the retreat. The facilitator should draw some conclusion as to what was covered during the meeting and end on a positive note—making participants feel that their time was well spent.

If you've done a good job at defining success up front, then it will be easier to measure the results once the retreat is over. Still, you will want to hear from participants to learn what they thought about the retreat.

After the retreat, ask trustees to evaluate the meeting's effectiveness. You might prepare a simple questionnaire that you pass out at the end of the retreat or e-mail to them shortly after. Consider asking questions such as:

- What Stewardship Principles did we address at the retreat?
- Was the time used well?

- Did we accomplish what we said we would?
- How did the materials you received in advance help you prepare?
- Did the retreat start and end on time?
- How well did we work together? What could we have done better?
- What else do you wish had happened at the retreat?
- What was your impression of the facilitator?
- How often should we hold a retreat/meeting like this?
- What would you like to see on the next agenda?

Assessment is important—it helps you understand how the experience went for everyone involved and will help you when you're ready to plan the next retreat. It may also pinpoint areas that need further clarification or follow-up.

Following Up

Most people leave a retreat or meeting with big intentions to do what they said they would do. In the moment, though, they may forget how many other commitments they have waiting for them. After the retreat is over, how do you follow up and keep everyone advancing?

You can remind members what was accomplished during the retreat—and more important, what still needs to be done. Here are some ideas:

Immediate Follow-up

In the days immediately following the meeting, contact governing body members who have been assigned tasks. Remind them what they agreed to and when it is due. Some organizations prepare and distribute a sample "task sheet" for trustees between meetings, reminding everyone of their interim responsibilities. Others send simple e-mail reminders.

Meeting Summary

Prepare a meeting summary and distribute it to all meeting participants and to any key staff who did not attend. If you hire an outside facilitator, sometimes they will prepare the summary for you (depending on your initial agreement).

Keep the summary short (one or two pages), listing only the important highlights—the who, the what and the what now. You might start the summary by listing the intended outcomes stated before the meeting and indicating which of those outcomes were met.

It's important to write and distribute the meeting summary quickly, while the retreat is still fresh in everyone's mind. Try to distribute it within two or three weeks of the meeting. Remember, a simple record of what happened is far better than a play-by-play transcript that takes months to produce.

A useful structure for the meeting summary might be:

- **Key decisions**—Include the next steps that everyone agreed upon and the strategies for achieving them. This should be short, clear and easy to read.
- **Action steps**—Provide a detail of what people will actually do: Who will take what action and by what date. You may want to put the action steps into chart form making it easy to track assignments. (See sample at the end of this chapter.)

- **Pending items**—List those topics that were not fully discussed or resolved. These can go on an agenda for a future meeting or retreat.
- **Flip-chart notes and handouts**—Record words from flip charts created at the retreat and include copies of any important handouts. This gives members a chance to go back to review the details of various discussions.

Giving Positive Reinforcement

A successful retreat can be a great experience for everyone involved. Your governing body members will leave feeling fresh, excited about new initiatives and inspired by the collegial spirit.

But what happens when a few months pass? All the energy and commitment may fade, and the governing body may be feeling lackluster once again. When the bubble of the retreat environment bursts, sometimes the group is left with post-retreat letdown. Here are some ways you can keep members engaged over the long haul.

- **Provide retreat mementos**—A useful or decorative memento can serve as a reminder of the retreat. It might be a photo of all the members, a scrapbook from the retreat or something simple like a coffee mug or desk ornament.
- **Send out periodic post-retreat updates**—Schedule regular times to e-mail the governing body updates from the action plan or reports from different committees. Refer back to the events and outcomes from the retreat. Consider reporting on the status of action items as a standing agenda item at future meetings, even if only in a written report.
- **Acknowledge accomplishments**—Look for ways to reward individual governing body members or the group as a whole for the extra effort they made. Talk about achievements during meetings. Send e-mails and personal notes to everyone who contributed.
- **Make connections**—Even when the retreat is said and done, you can continue to connect your daily work to the learning that took place there. Remind your members to keep the big picture in mind. Relate what you do to a larger purpose and to the Stewardship Principles available in the field.
- **Post flip charts**—Remind members of what happened at the retreat by posting some of the key flip-chart notes at future meetings.
- **Plan a follow-up meeting or retreat**—It's never too early to start thinking about the next retreat.

Peer Practice:

How Often Should You Hold a Retreat?

"My goal is to continue to devote one of our annual meetings each year to non-grantmaking topics and to have a full day or multiday retreat every three years. This would give us meeting time between retreats to focus on big picture issues and reflection, but would still allow the 'retreat mode' to be special, strategic, long-term planning, etc. I would like to continue to use the Stewardship Principles as an objective measure of our work, most likely in preparation for or as part of retreats in the future, so we will likely come back to the principles and measure our progress against them every three years or so."

—Liz Tauck Walters, Managing Director, Tauck Foundation

One final word of advice: Aim for your organization to be a success, but understand that no retreat is necessarily a cure-all or a miracle maker. Retreats are a means to an end and not necessarily a one-time event. Don't expect to transform your governing body or grantmaking programs overnight. Do expect to celebrate where you are in relation to the Stewardship Principles and to enjoy more clarity in your governance, management and grantmaking.

> *"Retreats are fun. Everyone looks forward to them. When you talk to one another in a way that you usually don't, you can learn a lot."*
>
> *—Bill Conrad, Executive Director, Stackpole-Hall Foundation*

Peer Practice:

Retreat Scrapbooks

"During the retreat, we took photos of the board members working together during the group exercises. We put the photos together in a book, along with the notes from our flip charts, and distributed it to everyone who was there. This will give trustees the opportunity to relive the retreat. I look through it myself every few months and it helps me recap what was accomplished."

—Caroline Sabin, Executive Director, Powell Foundation

Lessons Learned

Retreats can be dynamic and inspiring milestones on your foundation's path to change. They help you use the Stewardship Principles in a way that they were intended—as a vehicle for you to celebrate what you do well and to identify what you can do better.

Here are some final words that your colleagues have shared that will help you design a successful retreat:

- **Take time to plan ahead.** The more you prepare for the retreat or meeting, the more successful it will be.
- **Find the right facilitator.** Be selective in whom you choose. Make sure they fit with your organization's needs and culture.
- **Introduce the idea of a continuum.** No organization does everything perfectly. Challenge your governing body members to move the organization forward on the continuum of "doing more things right."
- **Bite off only what the governing body can chew**. Don't try to do too much in one retreat. For example, focus on one or two Stewardship Principles the organization has chosen as its top priorities, instead of all of them at once.
- **Pat members on the back.** Start the retreat or meeting by celebrating what the organization already does well. They will be much more likely to respond to change if they feel good about it.

- **Similarly, don't beat the governing body over the head with what's going wrong.** Speak in terms of what's going well and what they wish was going better.
- **Focus on the options available.** Use the Stewardship Principles to introduce options for best practices and to show the governing body what works for their peers.
- **It's okay if you don't get as far as you hoped.** Remember, retreats are a work in progress. You might not get every aspect of the planning or the follow-up right the first time. Remember to include enough time to do what you need to do—but if it doesn't get done, there's always the next retreat.
- **Connect with others in the field.** There is plenty of support and advice out there. Contact the Council on Foundations to help you find your peers.
- **Lift the work up to a higher level.** Remind your members that this is the beginning of a continual process to improve governance. Even the most mundane work on internal processes enhances your own foundation's accountability and by extension the entire field.

You are now on your way toward principled planning. Best of luck.

For Your Next Governing Body Retreat

The Stewardship Principles are an excellent springboard for discussing and formulating new policy and procedures. This "short list" highlights key focus areas and ensures that the whole governing body, not just select individuals, fully understands the issues, policies and values presented. For your next retreat, consider one or more of the following based on your governing body priorities:

- Formulate or review the organization's mission, values and goals (Principle I).
- Assess grantmaking procedures and the impact of grants (Principle III).
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body (Principle I).
- Establish or review fiduciary, investment, self-dealing, expense and conflict-of-interest policies (Principle IV. and V).
- Assess the organization's exposure to risk and liability—include internal controls, recordkeeping and D&O insurance (Principle IV).
- Post the organization's history, mission, grant procedures, grant recipient list and financial statements online (Principle VII).
- Seek grantee, applicant and peer feedback on the organization's performance (Principle VI).
- Assess company and foundation or giving program alignment (Principle VIII).
- Evaluate employee involvement activities (Principle IX).

Samples

Meeting Summary/Action Plan Template

Adapted from Retreats That Work: Designing and Conducting Effective Offsites for Groups and Organizations, *Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2003*

Meeting of the XYZ Foundation

Date:

Location:

Purpose:

Present:

Decisions:

Because of this meeting, the governing body agreed on the following action steps

1)

2)

3)

Follow-Up Action Items:

These members agreed to work on the above action steps as follows:

What	By Whom	By When

Retreat Evaluation

Adapted from Self-Assessment of Foundation Boards, *www.boardsource.org*

To help us assess and improve the quality of the retreat, please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to the retreat facilitator. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Retreat: **Date:**

1. In what ways was the retreat useful in helping you
   a. Identify important strengths of your governing body?
   b. Identify areas of operation or governance that need improvement?
   c. Clarify your understanding of the governing body's major responsibilities?
2. What were your expectations for the retreat?
3. Were your expectations met? How or how not?
4. What was the most valuable or productive part of the retreat? Why?
5. What was the least valuable or productive part of the retreat? Why?
6. Please rate the retreat in each of the following areas, 1 being negative, 4 being positive:

Preparation	1	2	3	4
Organization	1	2	3	4
Appropriateness of Agenda	1	2	3	4
Facilitation	1	2	3	4
Allocation of Time	1	2	3	4
Overall Effectiveness	1	2	3	4

7. On the basis of this process, what specific steps do you think the governing body should take in the next three to six months?
8. Additional comments or recommendations?

Developing a Travel Policy

Written by Jane C. Nober, Special Counsel to the Council on Foundations

Under the rules applicable to private foundations, directors or trustees and staff members may be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in connection with the foundation's charitable activities. Such expenditures fall under the heading of administrative costs and will generally count toward the foundation's minimum distribution requirement, or payout.

What are "reasonable and necessary" expenses? They are expenses that are necessary for the foundation's operation and reasonable in amount. If that definition does not clarify the issue for you, do not feel alone; determining what appropriate expenses are is difficult and depends on assessment of the foundation's activities and finances and the role that employees and directors play. Remember, too, that what seems reasonable and necessary to one group of people may seem stingy or lavish to others. We often suggest that foundation managers consider whether they would feel comfortable justifying a particular expenditure to board members, the IRS, a state attorney general or the local newspaper before they undertake it.

Difficult as it may be, however, it is important to develop—and stick to—clear foundation policies on expenses. State regulators tell us that when they examine a foundation's expenditures, they look for evidence that foundation managers have thought about the various areas in which expenses arise and have developed a reasonable policy to guide spending. Following are some of the questions that may be raised when considering what administrative expenses the foundation will cover for employees and directors who travel on behalf of the foundation.

Meeting Locations

Meetings should be planned at sites that are convenient, economical and conducive to the work being done. The foundation may wish to set a maximum hotel room rate and provide parameters for appropriate on-site meal prices. If foundation personnel travel frequently, the foundation may wish to negotiate for discounted rates with a certain hotel chain or in a particular city. As telecommunications capabilities increase, we can expect more meetings to take place without all participants being physically present—a potentially cost-saving development.

Airline Travel

Many organizations insist that their employees fly coach class absent very special circumstances. Are there any circumstances under which the foundation's employees or directors should fly other than coach? Some factors to consider may include the length of the flight or whether the employee or director has a medical condition that requires him or her to have more space.

Should the policy encourage travelers to stay over on Saturday nights or take other measures that decrease fares? Does the foundation wish to require that all travelers make arrangements through a limited number of agencies so costs can be monitored?

Ground Transportation

What methods of ground transportation will the foundation permit? Should travelers be encouraged to share rides? What will the foundation pay if an individual drives his or her own car? (The mileage allowances provided annually by the IRS may be a good guide.)

Spouse Travel

In general, spouse travel expenses may not be charged to the foundation (exceptions arise when the spouse is also a foundation employee or is performing necessary services for the foundation). Indeed, paying spouse travel expenses will in many cases be an act of self-dealing for the foundation unless treated as compensation to the foundation managers. A travel policy should set forth circumstances in which it will be permissible to include spouses in foundation events and how expenses are to be handled.

As expenditure by charities come under heightened scrutiny from federal and state authorities and the press, foundations can contribute positively to the charitable sector's image by stressing their tradition of responsible and effective philanthropy. Carefully considering how charitable dollars are spent is part of that effort

Resources

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